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ECCLESIASTES ANGLICANUS:

BEING A

TREATISE ON PREACHING,

AS ADAPTED TO A

CHURCH OF ENGLAND CONGREGATION:

IN A

SERIES OF LETTERS TO A YOUNG CLERGYMAN.

BY THE

REV. W. GRESLEY, M. A.

LATE STUDENT OF CHRIST CHURCH.

Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.—2 Tim. ii. 15.

FIRST AMERICAN, FROM THE SECOND ENGLISH EDITION,

WITH

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES,

COLLECTED AND ARRANGED BY THE

REV. BENJAMIN I. HAIGHT, M. A.

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MANNING OUT LOAD
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TO

THE REV. BIRD WILSON, D. D.,

PROFESSOR OF SYSTEMATIC DIVINITY IN THE GENERAL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

WHOSE DEEP AND VARIED LEARNING,
UNAFFECTED PIETY,
CONSTANT GENTLENESS AND AFFABILITY,
WHILE ADORNING THE CHAIR HE FILLS, COMMAND THE RESPECT AND SECURE THE LOVE, AS WELL OF THOSE WHO SIT AT HIS FEET TO LEARN,
AS OF THOSE WHOSE PRIVILEGE IT IS TO BE AMONG THE NUMBER OF HIS FRIENDS,

THIS EDITION

IS MOST RESPECTFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED,
BY HIS GRATEFUL PUPIL AND
MUCH OBLIGED FRIEND,
THE EDITOR.

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE AMERICAN EDITION.

In preparing the American edition of Mr. Gresley's valuable Treatise, a few foot notes have been added by the Editor, which are distinguished by brackets. The more extended notes at the end have been selected from the best works on the subject—and which, with one or two exceptions, are not easily accessible to the American student.

PREFACE

TO THE SECOND EDITION.

In preparing this edition for the press, I have availed myself largely of the suggestions of many valued friends, and of the criticisms of several unknown reviewers. The materials are entirely re-arranged: in many parts the volume is condensed; in some, new matter has been added.

I have retained the form of letters because I considered it, on the whole, as well suited as any other for an elder person to convey instruction to a young friend; and admitting a plainness and familiarity of illustration, which in many parts of the subject seemed necessary.

In deference to the advice of those whose judgment I deemed worthy of respect, I have omitted quotations from living preachers, except where I was unable to supply an equivalent illustration.

It is perhaps impossible to write with interest on any subject, and not appear, at the time, to consider it as more important than it really is, in comparison with others. In treating of preaching, I have regarded it as one of God's

ordinances and an acknowledged instrument of man's salvation; yet I trust without assigning to it any exclusive or undue importance.

With these few remarks I again send forth my volume, with the earnest hope and prayer that it may be blessed by Almighty God to the good of his Church.

WILLIAM GRESLEY.

Lichfield, July, 1840.

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LETTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

My Dear ——

My present communication is the first of a series of Letters or Essays on Preaching; a subject which, as you have recently been ordained, must naturally occupy much of your attention. The recollection which I have of the want of some assistance of this sort, during the first years of my ministry, is the cause of my offering to you the results, such as they are, of my own study and reflection; and I sincerely hope they may not prove altogether valueless.

It was the often-repeated precept of the late Professor of Divinity, Dr. Lloyd, afterwards Bishop of Oxford, (whose lectures I had the happiness of attending,) "ALWAYS WRITE YOUR OWN SERMONS; for," said he, "a moderate sermon of your own will have twice the effect of a much better one written by another." This opinion is maintained by most writers on the subject; "Every person," says Bishop Sprat, "who undertakes this great employment, should make it a matter of *religion* and *conscience* to preach nothing but what is the product of his own study, and of his own composing."

There are not wanting, however, those who are of the contrary opinion. Addison says,[1] that Sir Roger de Coverly presented the clergyman of his parish with all the good ser-

[1] See Spectator, No. 106.

mons which had been published in English, and only begged of him that every Sunday he would pronounce one of them. And that this is not, as one might imagine, merely a humour of the worthy knight's, would appear from Addison's own concluding observations :—" I could heartily wish that more of our country clergy would follow his example, and instead of wasting their spirits in laborious composition, would endeavour after a handsome elocution, and all those other talents, to enforce what has been penned by greater masters. This would not only be more easy to themselves, but more edifying to the people." He is partly right: more easy to the preacher unquestionably it would be, inasmuch as it would require neither talent, nor learning, nor experience, nor knowledge of divinity, nor ability to compose; but that it would be more edifying to the people does not so plainly appear; and *that* is the point on which the question must be decided. Addison's opinion has been adopted by many. I have myself heard serious persons declare, that there is no excuse now-a-days for a clergyman preaching a bad sermon, because there are so many good ones published.[1]

A little consideration will, I think, dispose us to deny both the premise and the conclusion. First, *are* there many good sermons published? I should say decidedly, No,—not many that are well adapted for the pulpit. Sermons are published to be read, not to be preached. Mr. Fox used to ask of a printed speech, " Does it read well?" and being answered in the affirmative, said, " Then it was a bad speech." There should, in truth, always be a difference in style between what is to be read and what is to be spoken. " A report verbatim of any effective speech must always appear diffused and ungraceful in the perusal; the very repetitions and redundancy, the accumulation of epithets which

[1] See some excellent remarks in the Christian Observer, vol. v. p. 465.

gave force and momentum to the career of delivery, but weaken and encumber the march of style when read."[1] This may not apply quite so much to sermons, because the style of the pulpit is commonly less oratorical than that of other speeches. Still it is true of them, though in a less degree: for, when a clergyman prepares his sermon for the press, he will generally correct the style in order to adapt it to reading. Some of the best essays in our language appear in the shape of printed sermons; but if these were to be preached as they are published, they would be unimpressive *sermons*, precisely because they are good *essays*.[2]

But suppose that sermons *are* published as they are preached, and that many good ones are so published; still I am not prepared to admit that you would do well to preach them. It is a fallacy to suppose that the utility of preaching depends solely or chiefly on the goodness of the sermon. The truth is, that, in an effective sermon, there are many concurrent causes, besides its merit as a composition, to which we must look for its efficiency.

In the first place, it is essential to the force of all public addresses, and of sermons at least as much as any, that *they should be specially adapted to the character, capacity, circumstances, habits, prejudices, mode of thinking, and degree of knowledge of the hearers.* Now, how is it likely that these requisites should be attended to by a preacher who delivers a sermon composed a hundred years ago, or written for a congregation at a distant part of the kingdom? It is possible he may select one generally suited to his congregation, accordingly as the majority may be rich or poor, agricultural or commercial, educated or illiterate; but still it must of necessity want that minute and pointed adaptation to the hear-

[1] Moore's Life of Sheridan.

[2] See a Letter in the British Magazine for Sept. 1834, by W. F. H.

ers' circumstances, which constitutes a primary excellence in every address. And if it be difficult to select even one sermon which has this charm, how much more hopeless must it be to adapt the compositions of other people to your own congregation, during a long course of parochial preaching.

Another requisite for a sermon is, *that it should be the genuine language of your own heart.* "A sermon ought to be a delineation of the workings of the preacher's own mind." There will be a degree of earnestness and sincerity when you deliver your own thoughts and sentiments, which cannot be attained by those who use language which is not their own. "There is an authority in the simplest things which can be said, when they carry visible characters of genuineness with them:" and a man can never be eloquent but when he is speaking his own thoughts, and delivering his own sentiments. Although you may be perfectly convinced of the truth of what you take from another preacher's sermon, and sincerely anxious to impress it on your hearers, yet it is not possible, (except, indeed, for an accomplished actor, which, I suppose, it is not your wish to be,) to enter into the feelings and tone of the original composer, and deliver with warmth and energy sentiments which you have borrowed: for there is something peculiar in each man's way of thinking and expressing himself, of which it is not in the power of another to give a just notion.

And if it be difficult to preach the composition of another with propriety and force, even when the greatest pains are taken, it may be expected, that when proper pains are not bestowed, grievous blunders will sometimes occur. The study necessary for the composition of sermons is one of the principal means by which the preacher forms his opinions, and increases his stock of knowledge. A preacher of printed sermons is not in general of a very studious turn; hence it is not unlikely that his doctrine will be found somewhat

inconsistent. He may be an Arminian one Sunday, a high Calvinist the next. I have known such mistakes occur: nay, I have heard of a preacher veering about to opposite points of the compass even in one discourse. Such a sermon reminds us of Horace's monster,

"Desinit in piscem mulier formosa supernè."

which has been wittily translated—"The head of John Calvin clapped on the shoulders of Wesley." The worst thing you can do is to make a patch-work of your sermon, by taking part from one place, and part from another. If you must steal, steal it all, and all from the same place; but the better way is *not* to steal.

Besides, whatever may have been the public opinion in the time of Addison, it is certain that there is now a very general prejudice against a Clergyman who is too idle to compose his own sermons: it is considered disingenuous, and a sign of indolence very much like lukewarmness; insomuch that, should his congregation find it out, he may expect his church to be emptied, if there be another church or chapel near at hand. On all accounts, therefore, and not least for the last-mentioned reason, you will, I think, agree with me, that the Professor's advice was good.[1]

When, however, I recommend original composition, do not mistake me, as if I said that novelty of *thought* was desirable; this is the last thing which a preacher need aim at. New ideas in religion must almost inevitably be false; and if a young clergyman depends for materials entirely or principally on his own resources, his sermons will be rather defective in "strong meat." "I would have young clergymen," says Archbishop Secker, "make very great use of the works of able divines; not inconsiderately and servilely transcribe

[1] The practice of delivering the sermons of others has never prevailed in America, and would not be tolerated.

them, but study, digest, contract, amplify, vary, adapt them to the purpose, improve, if possible, what they find in them. For then it will fairly become their own, mix naturally with what proceeds altogether from themselves, and preserve their youthful productions from the imputation of being empty and jejune." Half the palaces at Rome of a certain date are built of the materials of the Coliseum; and I see no reason why you should not have full permission to dig your materials from the gigantic productions of former days; provided you do not throw them together in a rude promiscuous heap, but chisel them and fashion them for your purpose, and work them up into a new and goodly fabric. Sermons, thus composed, may be as truly your own, as the palaces at Rome were the production of their respective architects. Nay, to pursue our metaphor, there is no reason why you should not borrow your models also from those who have gone before you, and adapt them to present exigencies; as Palladio has borrowed his ideas from the noble conceptions of the ancients, and adapted the columns and pediments of Grecian architecture to the convenience of modern houses.

It has often surprised me, that when Bishop Lloyd so decidedly recommended original composition, he never devoted any of his lectures to teaching us how we ought to set about it. It was like setting us to make bricks without straw. He furnished us with the materials, but not with the means of working them up. Neither do I learn that his successors, who continue the same system of lecturing, have ever given instruction on this point; though I believe there is scarcely another civilized country in which this important branch of education is omitted.

In default of any regular instruction in the art of preaching, the young clergyman is left to collect his ideas on the subject from whatever source he can. His difficulties are well described by Mr. Raikes:—"The first efforts of a young

clergyman are generally nothing more than experiments. He has no previous practice. He begins, probably, by imitating one whom he admires: but his first efforts are attempts in an art which he has never studied, and in which he has no adviser to direct him. Even the theory of his system is unknown; and, it is probable, years will elapse before experience and reflection will lead him to discover that mode of preaching which is suited to his powers, and best calculated to edify his hearers." I can bear witness to the accuracy of this description.

The chief help which a student finds, to teach him the principles of oratory, is the Rhetoric of Aristotle. This treatise you are, I trust, well acquainted with: unless you have sadly misused your time at Oxford. From Aristotle you have learnt those rules which apply to every sort of composition. The general rules of the art of persuasion, whether as applied to the senate, the bar, or the pulpit, are founded on human nature, and must remain the same so long as human nature continues unchanged. But you want to be taught to apply the principles of Rhetoric to preaching before a Church of England congregation. You have, perhaps, read Claude's Essay. There is much useful matter in this work; and it sets you thinking and analyzing: but I should say, that it was more suited to the French than the English pulpit; and that the rules contained in it would produce far too elaborate and artificial a composition, and impair that simplicity which is one of the chief charms of pulpit eloquence. However, be this as it may, I will venture to say, that if you read Claude's Essay, you did not find it to be what you wanted. Aristotle has furnished you with the "tools" of Rhetoric, but Claude does not teach you the use of the *same* tools. You want something to connect the ideas which you have gained from Aristotle with those suggested by Claude; something which shall apply the principles of Aristotle to the

peculiar branch of Rhetoric which you wish to practice; in short, an application of the rules of Rhetoric to the Church of England pulpit.

Such, at least, I remember was my own feeling; and with a view to remedy the defect, for my own benefit, I wrote down and arranged whatever ideas I could collect on the subject. Many good hints were derived from Archbishop Whately's able book on Rhetoric, which was published about that time; some from Bishop Sumner's Apostolical preaching; one or two from Swift's Letter to a young Clergyman; and I have since found some excellent remarks scattered up and down in the Christian Observer, the British Magazine, and other periodicals. In short, wherever I have met with information on the subject, I have made a practice of setting it down for my own use; and this I have been in the habit of illustrating by passages from any sermon which I have perused, and of confirming or rejecting according to my own experience. In the hope of being of service to you, I have now (after much more labour than I anticipated when I began my task) drawn it up in the best order I was able; and if it prove useful to you shall be heartily glad. Though I do not promise you much original matter, yet, I think, I can give you some useful information, which, otherwise, you might not have met with. The suggestions which I have obtained from various authors are acknowledged whenever I remember where they came from; but I have no doubt there are many forgotten and unacknowledged. You will, however, have no difficulty in discriminating between them and my own. Like other candid readers, you will set down whatever good remarks you find as borrowed from some other writer, and attribute all the rest to your friend.

PART I.

ON THE MATTER OF SERMONS.

LETTER II.

THE END OR OBJECT OF PREACHING.

If the object of writing a sermon be nothing more than to produce a composition which shall occupy twenty minutes, or half an hour in the delivery, it may be granted that nothing can be more easy. With the large choice of subject, and the infinite range of argument and illustration, which the Holy Scriptures and the whole moral and material world afford, any one who can write at all may surely write a sermon. But, in truth, the real aim and object of a preacher, if duly estimated, is the most arduous which can be conceived. All who have thought seriously, or written on the subject, agree in admitting its difficulty. "The duty of a preacher," says one writer, "is to teach clearly, to convince successfully, and to persuade cogently." No very easy task is spoken of even in these few words. Another describes its object as being "to effect a mighty change in the moral condition of man, to bring back an apostate creature to al-

legiance, to restore the sinner to the likeness and favour of God."[1] "The great aim of a Christian preacher," says another, "is to bring the heart of the hearer into contact with the objects which Revelation presents to us, that, by the steady contemplation of these objects, he may transfer something of their character to his own: as northern animals have been fabled to gaze upon what is white, till they become themselves insensibly white in their turn."[2] This writer seems to propose something easier than the rest; but if we analyze his description, we shall find that it amounts to something very like making "the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots." The following is Dr. Campbell's description of the preacher's object. "The primary intention of preaching is the reformation of mankind..... a reformation of life and manners, of all things that which is the most difficult by any means whatever to effectuate; I may add, of all tasks ever attempted by persuasion, that which has most frequently baffled its powers. . . . . That man would need to be possessed of oratory superior to human, who would effectually persuade him that stole to steal no more, the sensualist to forego his pleasures, the miser his hoards, the insolent and haughty to become humble and meek."[3] "The sum and end of preaching," says Tillotson, "is to bring men to repentance and a firm belief in the gospel." As we shall have to recur frequently to our definition of the object of preaching, and constantly to keep it in view, perhaps it will be found convenient to condense and simplify all these descriptions, and to state it to be, what I suppose none will be disposed to deny, "*to win souls to Christ.*" It may be said, indeed—and said with truth—that those whom we address have been already brought to Christ at baptism, have been

[1] Christian Observer. [2] Quarterly Review, xxxix. 288.
[3] Campbell's Philosophy of Rhetoric, book i. ch. x. sec. 5.

received into the arms of his mercy, and engrafted into his holy Church. But, alas! I fear it is too certain to admit of dispute, that all have more or less fallen from the state of grace, and need repentance and renewal unto holiness. The best have to be reminded continually of their baptismal promises and privileges, lest they neglect or lose them; but by far the larger portion need to be addressed as men still at enmity with God—still requiring to be "won to Christ."

It is manifest that in every congregation there are, generally speaking, two sorts of persons to be addressed, those who are living in sin, and those who are humbly walking in the faith and fear of God; in one word, good and bad Christians. The good require to be drawn nearer to Christ by encouragement, direction, caution, remembrance, and by setting before them all the glorious topics of revealed truth, whereby their faith may be sustained, their devotion elevated, and their good resolutions strengthened. And for them the providence of God has prepared an aid far beyond any which the preacher can afford, in the ordinances and sacraments of the Church, and in our holy and beautiful Liturgy; by the humble use of which good and faithful men are led continually forward in their Christian course.

It is in dealing with the other class that the Preacher's chief difficulty consists. Supposing (what I fear we must do) that the majority of our congregations are not "walking worthy of the vocation with which they are called," but are more or less "in the gall and bitterness of sin," it must be the preacher's object to effect a change, not in their outward manners, but in the very nature and condition of the soul: and herein consists his main difficulty.

O what a host of prejudices and passions is arrayed against him! What a band of veteran troops, hardened in the service of sin, is brought to bear upon his unwelcome invasion! What stubborn materials are they on which he has to

work! Even if there were no active principle of resistance to contend with, what a mass of inert matter is there to move! How true is this, yet how strange! One would have thought, that when an acknowledged minister of God stood before an assembly of men, they would have received him with the same serious attention as Cornelius and his household received the apostle Peter; "Now, therefore, are we all here present before thee, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." One would have thought, that as he went on to speak on their eternal interests, and to set before them life, and death, and judgment to come,—to teach them how they might escape the everlasting wrath of God, and save their souls alive,—all would have been mute attention, that fear and gratitude would have filled every heart. But I pray you take a survey from the pulpit of the congregation you are about to address. You behold them gathered there before you—(O what an awful scene!)—men who will be living thousands of thousands, and millions of millions of years hence—living either in a state of endless woe, or endless bliss. You are to them God's minister of mercy; and, on their acceptance or rejection of God's offer of mercy—ay, it may be their acceptance or rejection of it on this very day, (for some may never hear it more,) depends the character of their eternal destiny.[1] But what is the expression of feeling which you observe among them? Do they appear solemnly interested, as if they felt the deep importance of the business in hand? Alas! no. Instead of appearing humbly and anxiously desirous of instruction, observe many of them sitting in careless attitudes, and with countenances expressive of little interest in the subject brought before them,—a subject which ought to be, *in itself*, and, apart from all consideration of the character and ability of the preacher, of

[1] See Visitation Sermon, by Bickersteth.

deepest interest. How few are there who show signs of humble teachableness! How few are there who are hungering and thirsting after heavenly food! And these are the souls you have to "win to Christ." You have to rouse the slumberer to attention, to awe the supercilious critic and make him learn humility, to convince the giddy sons and daughters of the world of the peril in which they stand, to infuse a spirit of heavenly-mindedness into the breast of the cold formalist;—in short, your task is to subdue the various evil propensities of your hearers' corrupt nature, and to make them know and feel, that it is no indifferent matter on which you address them, but an affair of life and death—of happiness or woe eternal.

What adds still more to the arduous nature of your task is, *that it is necessary to create*, not merely a powerful, but *a permanent effect;* you must not barely cause a transient qualm of conscience, a momentary ebullition of feeling, but you have to make a lasting impression on the heart, and effect a corresponding change of conduct. This point is essential. If you have not done this, you have done nothing. And, if we look at this point only, how far easier is the task of every other speaker.[1] The advocate has gained his point when he has obtained a verdict for his client. It matters little to him what may be the opinion of the jury to-morrow. The speaker at the election, the convivial party, or public meeting, has generally little more to do than to ingratiate himself with his partisans, by expressing sentiments congenial with their own. When the last cheer has died away, his task is done. Even the senator speaks principally for present effect. But with the Christian preacher a *permanent* impression is every thing; if he fails in this, his labour is thrown away.

[1] See Campbell's Philosophy of Rhetoric.

Again, you will find, that though, in reality, the subject of your address is the most momentous business in which any human being can be employed, it is next to impossible to give it that character of reality, which at other times so greatly assists the speaker. Your message, though it be from heaven, is an oft-told tale: the sound of the Gospel falls like lead on the ear; the same persons have heard the same truths discussed week after week; and the utmost you can accomplish is, by some variety of argument or illustration to prepare the same heavenly food in a more palatable shape: and even then they will listen to you rather as to one playing on "a pleasant instrument," than as if you were speaking on a matter of important business. On all other occasions of public speaking men come, with eager looks and anxious minds, to hear something in which they really have a personal interest; but, strange to say, it requires your whole power of persuasion to give this business-like character to a sermon. One cause of this apathy is because you speak of *things*, not *persons*.[1] There is no personal collision; you miss the excitement of opposition; and many of the most effective instruments of oratory are forbidden. You may not rouse the more easily-excited passions of your hearers, nor flatter their vanity, nor give in to their prejudices. There is no place for cutting sarcasm, nor fierce invective, nor cool and dignified irony; all these spirit-stirring topics, all that is most agreeable to the natural man, must be avoided, and you must confine yourself to the plain words of soberness and truth.

Another disadvantage is, that you have to provide a sermon, or perhaps more, every Sunday. You are obliged to husband your resources, and confine yourself closely to the subject; which, though profitable for all parties in the long

[1] See Campbell's Philosophy of Rhetoric, book i. ch. x. sect. 3.

run, yet certainly curtails the flights of your eloquence. Then you have to preach in the same place, and before the same congregation. No man is a prophet in his own country; no preacher an apostle in his own pulpit. A new preacher, with half his talent, would be more attended to, till the novelty was worn off. So let me tell you here for your comfort—for it is time to give you some comfort—that you need not be alarmed nor mortified, if an itinerant preacher or lecturer comes into your parish, and draws away half your congregation. Take no notice, do nothing to obstruct him, only let him have his own way, and be diligent in your own duty; and in two or three Sundays most of your stray sheep will find their way back.

The last difficulty to which I shall allude, is the circumstance of your having to address an assembly composed of so great a variety of persons. An ordinary church congregation is, of all audiences, the most promiscuous. High and low, rich and poor, old and young, one with another, all must be instructed, convinced, persuaded. The preacher has to adapt his arguments, and language, to the comprehension and edification of every class; and not only every class as to external circumstances, but also in spiritual attainments. "It is no easy matter to excite and awaken drowsy souls without terrifying and disturbing some tender conscience, to bear home the conviction of sin without the appearance of personal reflection."

All these things are against the preacher; and, if he looks only to this side of the question, he may be inclined to say—"who is sufficient for these things?" and either give up his office in despair, or content himself with reading the compositions of others. But remember, my dear friend, that the preacher of the Gospel has placed himself in the situation of God's ambassador, and is acknowledged as such; he has put his hand to the plough, and may not look back. "To

preach the Gospel," says Mr. Benson, "is a burden which they have laid upon their own shoulders; to bear it for life is a task which they have assumed, and woe be unto them if they preach not the Gospel daily and duly, and in all their ways, and words, and works."

It is indeed a difficult task—not less than to say to the dead, arise! to bid the blind open their eyes, the deaf hear, and the lepers be cleansed—but remember that you speak in the name of God. You stand as the representative of the Apostolic ministry, bearing God's commission and credentials. "It is not you that speaks, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you"[1]—"We are labourers together with God."[2] Remember that he is with you who is able to smooth all difficulties, to make the crooked paths straight, and out of the mouths of babes and sucklings to ordain strength, and He will give His blessing to faith, and prayer, and earnestness—not to human ability. The office of a preacher may indeed furnish ample scope for the application of first-rate talent; still first-rate talent is not essential; prayer and faithfulness are of far more real value.

Consider this also—that the subject which you handle is the most sublime imaginable; so sublime as to make the most illiterate preacher eloquent, if he be but earnest. It is fraught with the deepest interest; and though men are wont to be insensible to its call, yet others have been able to rouse them, and why should not you? Think of the results of God's blessing on the labours of many. How many notorious sinners have been converted! how many parishes visibly improved! besides the unseen working of that silent stream, which flows, and purifies the hearts of many in secret, whose disease and cure have been alike unknown to men.

Persuade yourself then with a holy confidence, that God

[1] Matt. x. 20. [2] 1 Cor. iii. 9.

intends to accomplish His work, even by "the foolishness of your preaching." When making your preparation, believe that what you are at that moment doing, may, through the power of God, be the blessed means of awakening some sinner, who is slumbering on the brink of ruin; or confirming some one who is wavering; that it may have considerable influence on many who hear you, nay, through God's grace, may be the means of saving some immortal soul. With such a feeling as this, you will pursue your course with an ardour and steadiness, very different from the cold and feeble attempts of those who expect no such results.[1]

And why should you not, with humble confidence in God, hope and expect that success may attend even on your feeble endeavours. Surely, with the education which you have received, and the external advantages which you possess, it will be your own fault—since God has promised his blessing to the faithful and diligent—if you are a profitless labourer. Ought it to be too much to expect, that they, who take upon themselves the office of a Christian minister, should have piety, earnestness, and diligence? If you are possessed of these requisites, great talents and eloquence may be dispensed with. There is no need, as in other situations, of much quickness or promptness of intellect; for you always have ample time to make preparation: and though you may be "slow of speech," yet "the word of God is quick and powerful." It is good sound sense—*the good sense of a good man*—which is, humanly speaking, the main requisite for an effective preacher. "If a minister feels that he is not gifted with great power of imagination, let him aim at the clear forcible manner of serious good sense," and, acting in the integrity of his heart, and putting his trust in God, he need not despair of being a valuable and useful minister

[1] See Christian Observer, v. 276.

of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and doing as much good in the cause of truth, as if he were endowed with more brilliant talents.

One thing I would beg you to bear in mind—that *popularity is no sure test of a preacher's excellence, nor the want of it, of his deficiency.* Though your sermons should not be much talked of, nor applauded, you are not to conclude that they have made no impression. "There is a great deal of difference between people admiring a preacher, and being edified by his sermons."[1] "You should not look so much for brilliant success, as for gradual improvement in your parish, church more frequented, more communicants, more attention, less formality; all which cannot be effected by a few sermons, however powerful, but require years of earnest preaching." You must persevere with diligence, and work cheerfully with faith, waiting for the return of your labours in God's good time. The seed which you have sown may be silently springing up, even though *you* be not permitted to reap the crop. Act and preach with this spirit, "and thy word shall not return unto thee void, but shall accomplish that whereunto it was sent."[2]

[1] Bishop Wilson. [2] Isaiah lv. 2.

LETTER III.

THE PRINCIPAL TOPICS OF THE PREACHER.

HAVING considered the end or object which the preacher has in view—its great importance as well as difficulty—our next inquiry will be as to the means of accomplishing that object. And first, concerning *the topics or matter of the discourse*, and the sources from whence they are to be drawn.

Herbert and other writers recommend a young clergyman to digest all his knowledge into a certain scheme or order, so arranged and divided, that he may always have some head to which to refer whatever new ideas he may gain, and never be at a loss for matter on any subject. Besides a perfect knowledge of the Scriptures, "The country parson," says Herbert, "hath read the Fathers also, and the School-men, and the later writers, or a good proportion of all: out of all which he hath compiled a book or body of divinity which is the store-house of his sermons, and which he preacheth all his life, but diversely clothed, illustrated, and enlarged." This plan has its advantages as well as disadvantages. It is useful to assist the memory, and in some respects to aid the judgment; but there is danger of its leading you into a private system, which is the bane of modern theologians. Does it no rather savour of presumption for a man to suppose that he can comprehend the infinite topics

of natural and revealed religion, in *any* system of his own? and are not the practical results, too generally, that those parts which do not readily accommodate themselves, are altered and explained away, until they often become very materially changed from their original truth? There are many parts of Revelation as well as of nature, which no man, with his present faculties, can thoroughly understand or reconcile together; and the endeavour to systematize what is incomprehensible has led to much error, and needless dispute. The word of God was not written to satisfy curiosity, or to build a theory upon, but it was "written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."[1] Therefore, on the whole, I think it better for you to arrange the materials in your common-place book, *not* according to any system of your own, supposed to be "totus teres atque rotundus;" but in the common alphabetical mode recommended by Locke.

It is, however, most necessary that you should well understand what the Church teaches as the scheme and substance of Scriptural truth. Now the Church presents revealed truth to her sons under various forms, according to variety of circumstances. In her Creeds, she has set forth the *confession* of the true faith as it has been received in all ages. In the Liturgy, the same great truths are contained in a *devotional* form. The Catechism is a summary of Christian faith and duty, which our own branch of the Church has prepared for the instruction of her children: the Articles are her standard of orthodoxy, and her protest against error.

In the pulpit the same great and eternal truths are set forth by her ministers under a somewhat different form.

[1] John xx. 31.

The preacher stands as the Ambassador of God, to declare the message of salvation, and his object is to "win souls to Christ." Now, in order to accomplish this object, the first step obviously is to convince men of the *need* of the gospel of Christ, and to kindle in their hearts a *desire* of being his. If men have no desire to be Christians in sincerity and truth, they will take no steps to be so; or, if they think themselves good enough already, they will not strive after improvement.

In order, therefore, to induce men to accept the terms of the Gospel, your first point is to impress on them their sinfulness, and the degradation and inherent weakness of their nature. Of course if, from experience, you have reason to think that the members of your own congregation in particular are well aware, and practically convinced, of this elementary principle, and need only be "built up," and edified, and kept in the right path, you will touch the less on this point. Still, it is well to speak of it often by way of remembrance; as when St. Paul says, "We ourselves also *were* sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures."[1] "What fruit had ye *then* in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?"[2] But I fear, that in most congregations, there are very few who require to be reminded only of the unprofitableness and misery of *past* sin: by far the greater part have yet to be convinced of the need of a Saviour, by having the danger of their *actual* condition laid before them. And it is not enough merely to state in general terms the Scripture doctrine of the corruption of our nature; but you must follow it up by showing your hearers the symptoms of it in themselves. You must anatomize their hearts, and set before them evident signs of their vanity, pride, self-conceit, envyings, lusts, love of ease, love

[1] Titus iii. 3. [2] Romans vi. 21.

of pleasure, love of money, love of self, alienation from God, attachment to the world, want of relish for spiritual things. You should show them how inconsistent is all this with the perfect and holy law of God, and how dangerous it is,—how fatal it must be,—to their eternal interests, if unrepented of. And then you should point out to them their utter helplessness and incapacity to turn and extricate themselves from the trammels of sin, and to satisfy the law of God—the impossibility of their either making satisfaction for their past sins, or by their own strength, amending their present course. You may appeal to their experience. Either they have had no inclination to turn from their sins, or have made no serious attempt; or else, if they have attempted, have entirely failed; and have either relapsed into their former course, or are living in an uncomfortable state of dubious conflict, "the spirit lusting against the flesh, and the flesh against the spirit." You may confidently urge all this, for they cannot deny it; only, it must be urged, not in a severe, or caustic, or unconcerned manner, but with all the warmth of affectionate concern. But at the same time beware of the opposite error, into which some preachers fall, of making their hearers fancy themselves *sufferers* rather than *sinners*—to be pitied rather than blamed. Be sure you leave the impression that it is to ourselves only that we are indebted for our continuance in sin and danger; for that the means of grace and salvation are freely offered to us all. It is only when men are impressed with a conviction of their actual sin and real danger, that they will be disposed to receive with humility, and thankfully to close with, the offer of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

This is the second great point of your preaching. This is the Gospel properly so called—the *good tidings* of salvation through Christ. The Gospel message must be proved to come from God, declared in all its graciousness, and set

forth in all its excellence. And here will come in the *evidences*. I speak of them now, not as being the first or principal point connected with the Gospel message, but for convenience of arrangement. It is right in this skeptical age that you should take care that your hearers are furnished with "a reason of the hope that is in them." An evil heart of unbelief is at the root of all sin. Formerly unbelief was practical only; the sinner went on sinning, unconscious that he was at heart an infidel. But now infidelity is acknowledged. In your endeavours to counteract it, you will not do well to preach on the evidences prominently and directly. Opportunities will often occur, in the course of Scriptural explanation, of clearing up difficulties, and pointing out confirmations of faith. Set yourself up rather as a friend and supporter of the believer, than as the antagonist of the infidel. Do not argue as if to refute gainsayers, but to instruct the well-disposed: and take care not to reason *into* doubt those who never doubted before. It is better for the most part to assume that your hearers are believers in Scripture; and to endeavour to strengthen and confirm their faith by declaratory instruction concerning the nature and purpose of God's dispensation, and by extolling its excellence. You should take occasion to explain the course of Providence with regard to the ordinary and natural arrangements of this world, the *à priori* probability, so far as we can judge, of a revelation, the excellence and consistency of the revelation which we have received, and its admirable adaptation to our wants. Explain the connection between the Old and New Testament—the fulfillment of prophecy—the mighty deeds which accompanied the ministry of our Saviour and the Apostles—His divinity, or rather His Deity—distinguishing him carefully from divinely-inspired *men*. Explain his humanity; dwell often and earnestly on the wonderful fact of the Son of God, equal to his Father, Creator of all things,

Lord of all things, consenting voluntarily to take upon himself the form of a man, with all its suffering and infirmities. Then, enlarge on the beauty of his character, his goodness, and wisdom, as well as power, his gentleness and meekness, his piety and benevolence;—make your hearers, if you can, enamoured of the character of Jesus—in order that not only their reason may be convinced, but their affections won. Explain to them, in a plain and almost familiar manner, every thing connected with their Saviour—all the incidents of his ministry—all the most minute particulars of his history—his example—his offices; but, most especially, dwell with fervour and gratitude on the circumstance of his death for our sakes. Enlarge on the pains of hell from which he has saved us—the joys of heaven which he has purchased for us, by his blood. Impress it solemnly on your hearers *that by his death atonement was made for their sins;* that by no other means they could have escaped condemnation—but, that *through their Saviour's sacrifice,* all that "believe in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

After this, you arrive *at all the topics of a holy and religious life*—all the Christian privileges and Christian duties. We have received at baptism a claim to all the benefits purchased for us by the blood of our Redeemer; we have been made members of his body the Church, children of God, inheritors of heaven. But we have incurred also deep responsibilities. "Christ suffered for us, leaving an example that ye should follow his steps."[1] We must walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love[2]. . . . forgiving one another, as God for Christ's sake *hath* forgiven us.[3] In short, here come in the Christian requirements, virtues, and graces—love, joy, peace, long-suf-

[1] 1 Peter ii. 21. [2] Ephes. iv. 1, 2. [3] Ibid. v. 32.

fering, gentleness, meekness, all must be set forth in their most attractive colours; and the necessity dwelt on of mortifying the flesh, subduing its lusts, growing in grace, and purifying the temple of the Holy Ghost. The precepts of religion may here be spoken of not so much in the light of a *law*, as of a *rule* of life—not as requirements which we *must obey*, but as directions which we shall *delight* to follow. These topics you must learn to discriminate and particularize; not speaking of them in vague and general terms, but making them appear, as they are, within the reach of all. And do not inculcate holiness as a mere *after-thought* in the scheme of redemption, but as the *end* and *object* of it. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, *teaching us* that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, *that he might* redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."[1] Neither forget to take notice, by way of caution, of the temptations, discouragements, drawbacks, and disappointments, which beset the Christian's path; the deceitfulness of our own hearts, the weakness of our nature, and the liability to sin, which still remain while we dwell in this tabernacle of flesh. Insist on the need of unremitting diligence, and the incompatibility of Christian holiness with the continuance in any known sin. Set forth in strong terms, the absolute need of the continued aid of the Holy Spirit, the impossibility of our perseverance in our Christian course without Him; but, at the same time, bid your hearers be well assured that *with* His aid they shall gloriously triumph.

[1] Titus ii. 11–13.

Lastly, enforce *the necessity of constant recurrence to the ordinary means of grace.* Set forth the Church as an institution divinely appointed for embracing us within the arms of mercy, and sustaining our faith, and being to us "the pillar and ground of the truth." Dwell much, especially in the present days, on the sacraments and ordinances of the Church; particularly on the need of partaking constantly of the body and blood of Christ our Lord. Remind them to read the Scriptures diligently, and observe the Lord's day; and finally, bid them "watch and pray."

These are the grand staple topics of the preacher. You will see that, in any point of this scale, an infinite number of minor topics will branch out, and a copious store of materials may be found to illustrate any one of them. And you will find it better to preach on a precise and limited subject, than on a general one. But on whatever subject of detail you choose to preach, you should constantly refer to these first principles. If you are exalting any Christian grace, do not exalt it only for its own sake, but as an evidence of faith, and a sign that he who practises it is walking as a true member of the Christian family: so, if you are dissuading from any sin, do not make the avoidance of that sin the sole object; but speak of it as incompatible with Christian holiness, grieving the Spirit of God, and frustrating his gracious purpose of saving us.

As to what topics you should dwell on most frequently, this must of course depend on the requirement of your flock. If you find them ignorant of Christian doctrine, relying on mere moral duties and external ordinances, then it will be your duty to insist more frequently on the spiritual doctrines of the gospel. If, on the other hand, you find them priding themselves on their "clear views," but neglectful of the ordinances, and sacraments, and means of grace, then the general tenor of your preaching should be such as may cor-

rect their error. Generally speaking, your object should be to set forth Christ, in all the fullness in which he is revealed in Scripture, to enlarge on his attributes and office, his recorded words and deeds. Preach Christ, in short, as he is preached in every page of Scripture: and trust to the Holy Spirit to give your hearers a justifying and sanctifying faith.

Let me, before concluding this branch of my subject, again caution you against the danger of falling into an arbitrary system, and adopting the opinion of some sect or party, instead of founding your instruction on the broad basis of a Scripture truth, as held and set forth by the Church. It is not that they who adopt a system do, of necessity, not preach the truth; but their fault is, that they commonly declare a part only of the truth; they dwell unduly, if not untruly, on certain portions of the Divine word, to the suppression, if not perversion, of other parts, which are of no less value and importance.

One test of your own feelings, whether or no they are biassed towards a private system, is to ask yourself this question: *Is there any portion of the word of God* (in the Epistles of St. Paul, or St. James, or in any other part of Scripture) *which I should wish to see differently worded?* I speak of course of the original Scriptures. If there is any part which your conscience tells you, you wish might be altered or modified, depend on it, you are more or less drawn into the vortex of some arbitrary system of man's invention. Then only can you be pronounced free from bias, when you are content to receive the word of God, "not as the word of man, but as it is in truth, the word of God;" and then only may you be satisfied, that you will neither "corrupt it, nor handle it deceitfully."[1]

[1] See Note A, at the end of the volume: "Matter of Sermons."

LETTER IV.

HOW TO GAIN THE CONFIDENCE OF THE HEARERS.

The end of preaching is, as we have seen—like that of all other speaking—*persuasion*. Your hearers are of all degrees of intellect, and of every shade of character; all you have a right to assume respecting them is, that they have natural feelings, conscience, and common sense. It is through the means of these faculties that you have to influence the will. These are the avenues by which you are to reach it. The will is the fortress which you have to take, and it will require all your skill and energy, all your appliances and means. A simultaneous attack must be made on all points: you must win their confidence, convince their understanding, and move their feelings; and, above all, you must pray for the Divine blessing, without which your most strenuous efforts will be unavailing.

Most writers agree in assigning the first place in the art of persuasion to the employment of arguments to convince the understanding; yet Aristotle[1] incidentally confesses that the opinion formed by the hearer respecting the speaker is, so to speak, the most important point. If the great master of rhetoric allows this fact, when speaking of oratory in general, we shall do well to consider it so in that branch of rhetoric of which we are treating. Conviction, strictly speak-

[1] Arist. Rhet., lib. i. cap. ii. sec. 4.

ing, is not an essential part of a sermon. Your office is not always to *convince* your hearers of any thing which they are inclined to dispute; but, perhaps, more frequently to instruct them in what they are ignorant of, or imperfectly acquainted with; to remind them of what they have forgotten, and to urge them to act upon undisputed principles. You have not so much to convince them of the danger of sin, the mercy of God, and their own high privileges, as to induce them to think seriously on these matters, and to act accordingly.

But, in order to compass any one of these points, it is indispensable that *you should gain their confidence:* until you have done this, there will be a prejudice against every thing you say. Now by far the most important point, with a view to gain their confidence, is, that they should be, in the first place, aware that *you have received a divine commission to teach them.* On this point I would only observe, that in the lamentable ignorance of Church principles which at present unhappily prevails, it is absolutely necessary that you should, from time to time, as occasion serves, set forth, discreetly, but boldly, the doctrine of the apostolic succession; the fact that the Bishops alone have received authority in the Church of Christ to ordain Ministers, and the claim which Ministers so ordained have to the attention of the people. But this is a subject which scarcely comes within the province of rhetoric, and I touch on it only by the way, and proceed to the rhetorical requirements.

In order to gain the confidence of your hearers, three points must be established in their opinion—that you have *good principle, good will towards them, and good sense.*[1] You must give them reason to believe that you are sincere, —that you have their good at heart, and that you are competent to instruct them. I need scarcely observe to you, that

[1] Ἀρετὴ, εὔνοια, φρόνησις.—Arist. Rhet., lib. ii. cap. i. sec. 5.

the first step towards making them believe that you possess these qualities is *really* to possess them. Even a heathen rhetorician[1] declared, "that none but a good man could be an orator." How much more does this apply to a preacher of the Gospel than to any other speaker! If the congregation suspect, despise, or dislike, the man, not even the eloquence of St. Paul would effectually move them. They might admire his preaching,—nay, yield to his arguments, but they would not follow his advice. "A minister of evil life," says Bishop Jeremy Taylor, "cannot preach with that fervour and efficacy, with that life and spirit, as a good man does. For, besides that he does not himself understand the secrets of religion, and the private inducements of the Spirit, and the sweetness of internal joy, and the inexpressible advantages of holy peace,—besides all this, he cannot heartily speak all he knows. He hath a clog at his foot, and a gag in his teeth. There is a fear, and there is a shame, and there is a guilt, and a secret willingness that the thing were not true, and some little private arts, to lessen his own consent, and to take off the asperities, and consequent trouble, of a clear conviction."[2] St. Ambrose justly said, "Ipsam obmutescere eloquentiam si ægra sit conscientia."

It is apart from my present subject to enlarge on the necessity of general good character. I cannot, however, resist the opportunity of offering one or two remarks. You will have made but a very small progress towards the true character of a Christian minister, if you content yourself with merely avoiding evil; you must be ever striving after holiness, endeavouring to go on from strength to strength, and rendering yourself, by God's grace, more and more qualified for your responsible office.[3] The first thing is to purify your

[1] Quinctilian. [2] Sermon ix.

[3] I would strongly recommend you to read the lives of eminently pious and devoted ministers—no matter of what persuasion: if of a

heart, "to take care that all is right within;" the next, to regulate your outward conduct in scrupulous accordance with the requirements of the Gospel. You must not only abstain from evil, but you must "abstain from *all appearance* of evil,"[1] "in all things *showing thyself* a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing uncorruptness, sincerity, sound speech."[2] Do all you can, even in the smallest things, to gain the respect and love of your parishioners; be affable, courteous, patient, just, and charitable; pay your debts regularly; give no offence in any thing; be always ready to visit and converse with all your parishioners; and interest yourself both in their temporal and spiritual welfare. If you visit them at their houses, they will visit you at Church. With regard to your intercourse with the world and its amusements, I shall only set down one observation. *It matters not to the wolf what innocent recreation the shepherd is engaged in, if he be not tending his flock.* Always be adding to your store of theological knowledge, for unless your head is well stored, your efforts will be only like

> "Dropping buckets into empty wells,
> And growing old in drawing nothing up."

Lastly, often read your ordination vows, and the Epistles to Titus and Timothy; and, above all, "be instant in prayer."[3]

different persuasion from yourself, perhaps in some respects the better, to "provoke emulation." [Among the most interesting and valuable pieces of biography, may be mentioned Fell's Life of Dr. Hammond, Izaak Walton's Lives of Donne, Hooker, and Herbert, and Nelson's Life of Bishop Bull. It is an excellent rule for a student in Theology, always to have a volume of this kind, or one of practical divinity, on his table for daily perusal.]

[1] 1 Thess. v. 22. [2] Titus ii. 7.

[3] [Bishop Wilson's Sacra Privata (the complete edition) and Bishop Andrewes' Devotions, are among the very best guides and assistants in the discharge of this duty.]

But I must forbear to enlarge on these topics. Our present business is only with the rhetorical part of the subject; our object is to show how, from the discourse itself, you may give your hearers a favourable impression, and incline them to receive with confidence what you lay before them.

And, first, bear this in mind,—it is of the first importance,—namely, *that the complexion and effect of your sermon will depend very much on the feelings and motive with which you prepare and deliver it.* Let us stop, and inquire a moment into this matter. Preachers are, of course, of a thousand shades of character, but may be ranked under three classes. *First*, there are those who make and preach sermons because they are obliged to do so. It is with them an hebdomadal labour. They have a church to serve, and it is necessary for them to hold forth for a given time every Sunday, on some text of Scripture. Now those who make sermons with this feeling, might just as well save themselves the trouble. Written in this spirit, their discourses cannot but be dull and lifeless compositions; they might as well transcribe some good printed sermon; or why should they do even this? They have only to go to a bookseller, and they may have *lithographed* sermons, at so much per dozen, which shall be "warranted original, orthodox, and twenty minutes;" and these are got up so naturally, with erasures and interlineations, that even from the side gallery, within a yard of the preacher, they could not be distinguished from a manuscript. By the help of conning them over in the vestry, and then when you get into the pulpit, keeping your eyes well fixed on the book, and your finger opposite the line, you may, perhaps, get through them without making many blunders; but as to winning one soul to Christ, or comforting one righteous man, "that is not in the bond,"—that never entered the printer's head. But only let such

careless hirelings, when they look down upon their congregation, call to mind the line from Milton—

"The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed:"

let them think that souls longing for the bread of life, (or if not longing for it, yet on that very account in greater need of it,) are through their negligence perishing from hunger; and if they have a grain of feeling or common honesty, they will surely take pains to provide such food as may nourish them.

The *second* class of sermon-writers are those who have a great notion of their own ability, and take mighty pains to write their sermons with a view to display their talent. But these for the most part lose their labour. "The more pains," says the Archbishop of Cambray, "an haranguer takes to dazzle me by the artifices of his discourse, the more I despise his vanity. I love a serious preacher, who speaks for my sake, not his own; who seeks *my* salvation, not his own vainglory." Carefully avoid, therefore, whatever indicates a wish to make the service of Almighty God a vehicle for the display of your talent, or the gratification of your self-love. "To be despised for vanity is, perhaps, the greatest evil which can befall a preacher." Whatever good he may say will be of none effect. No talent, no eloquence, no pains, will avail him any thing, if he is evidently preaching not Christ, but himself. Above all things, therefore, aim at *singleness of heart*. Do not think "What shall I say, and how shall I say it, so that I may be thought an excellent preacher, and draw crowds to my church, and fix their attention, and move their feelings; but, how shall I most edify my flock?" Think of this alone. Many, indeed, preach with a sincere desire to do good, but still there is a degree of self-complacency, a desire of effect, mortification at failure, a wish not to be common-place, but to be original and

powerful, an anxiety to obtain the approval of their Christian friends. Even genuine Christians cannot always escape these errors.

> "O popular applause, what heart of man
> Is proof against thy sweet seducing charms?"[1]

All these secondary and equivocal motives should be put away altogether; and you should strive and pray that you may be enabled to preach with a single eye to the salvation of the souls committed to your charge.

Let us trust that, in spite of the infirmity of our nature, there are *thirdly*, many, very many, Christian preachers, who, through the aid of the Holy Ghost, are influenced by this motive; who "believe and therefore speak;" who are like "the good shepherd; and the sheep know their voice, and follow them." To such preachers the Holy Spirit will sanctify and bless the pains which they take for the fulfillment of their arduous office.

My first advice then to you, with a view to gaining the confidence of your hearers, is—let me again repeat it—that you compose and preach your sermon, *with a single eye to their salvation.*

[1] Cowper.

LETTER V.

HOW TO GAIN THE CONFIDENCE OF THE HEARERS. FIRST, BY SHOWING GOODNESS OF CHARACTER.

Supposing, then, that you sit down in your study to compose your discourse with a true and single heart, the next point is to know how to give your hearers this impression. It is scarcely necessary that I should here protest against the supposition, that I would recommend any unworthy or unjustifiable artifice. I shall speak of nothing but what is the preacher's bounden duty. It is his business to persuade his hearers, and this he cannot do without gaining their confidence: to gain their confidence then by all justifiable means is his bounden duty. I shall recommend nothing for which I cannot bring forward the authority of an Apostle. Nay, I will stop short of St. Paul. St. Paul scruples not, on many occasions, openly to commend himself. His station, and office, and the circumstances, and the manners of the times allowed it. He says—God "hath made us able ministers of the New Testament."[1] "I suppose I am not a whit behind the very chiefest Apostles, but though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge."[2] "We are not as many, which corrupt the word of God."[3] "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we

[1] 2 Cor. iii. 6. [2] 2 Cor. xi. 5, 6. [3] 2 Cor. ii. 17.

have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward."[1] "I laboured more abundantly than they all."[2] Thus, also, Moses recounts his services;[3] and Samuel publicly testifies his integrity.[4] Occasions may indeed arise, when it will be necessary for a modern preacher to appeal to his own character and conduct, and to assert his claims to the regard of his hearers; but, generally speaking, you cannot do so. You cannot say, I am an able minister, full of godly sincerity, and have nothing so much at heart as your salvation. But it is very right and necessary that you should endeavour by all honest means, to give your hearers this impression, which is so conducive to your success in persuading them. You should do incidentally what the times and circumstances allowed St. Paul to do openly and directly. Your discourse should be what Aristotle calls "ethical,"[5] that is, such as shall show forth your character and feelings.

In this letter I shall suggest to you the best mode of evincing your *Christian integrity* (ἀρετή).

The first point to be noticed is of a negative sort;—it is that you should *take great care that your arguments be fair and logical.* Like the knights of ancient chivalry, you should be scrupulous to come into the field, "without guile or evil arts." The slightest dishonesty in argument will throw discredit on your whole discourse. Men are impatient of the least symptom of sophistry in a sermon. I do not suppose that you would wilfully use fallacious arguments; but you must be very cautious not to fall into them inadvertently. Be careful not to represent as a necessary consequence what is only probable, nor press an argument which is liable to manifest objections. For which cause you

[1] 2 Cor. i. 12. [2] 1 Cor. xv. 10. See also Acts xx. 33.
[3] Deut. i. 9, &c. [4] 1 Sam. xii. 3. [5] Arist. Rhet., xi. 21, 16.

should beware how you adopt those which you find in writers of a controversial turn. They are very likely to lead you astray; for in the heat of controversy men are not scrupulous as to the arguments they use; and, however honest they may be in heart, yet their minds having a decided bias one way, they are apt to attribute more than just weight to their own arguments, and to undervalue those which make against them. So far from using sophistry, you should not even slur over objections. It is not meant that you are to put forward objections which your congregation would never have dreamt of; this would be going into the contrary extreme; but admit candidly, and answer fairly, those to which the subject is obviously liable. You will find that in this, as well as in other matters, honesty is the best policy. Candour is far more likely to convince opponents, and will not hazard any thing with friends. If there be the least suspicion of any thing being kept in the back-ground, your argument will lose its force. I do not say that it is good to *choose* subjects which involve difficulties and objections, but, if you meet with them, state them fairly.

On the same principle, do not exaggerate and magnify things beyond their due proportion, or depreciate them excessively. It gives an air of declamation and insincerity to the discourse. And do not bring forward texts, as confirmatory of your argument, which are notoriously disputed. Do not quote 1 John v. 7, "There are three that bear record in heaven," as a proof of the Trinity. It is possible you may have investigated this matter, and may be convinced in your own mind of the genuineness of the text; yet you must be well aware, that any of your congregation who have looked into the Unitarian controversy are informed, that the text in question is strongly disputed. Therefore, if you quote it without remark, as beyond doubt genuine, it

will be manifest to them, that you quote it on the chance of their ignorance of its doubtfulness.

The general rule with regard to the choice of arguments is to employ such as you judge most likely to convince your hearers; but in this place, speaking with reference rather to moral effect, I would suggest, what may appear contradictory, but is in truth concurrent with this principle, namely, to employ those arguments which *have convinced yourself;* —not those which are generally considered conclusive, but those which appear so to you. They will always come from you with more *ethical* force, and, consequently, with more power of conviction and persuasion. Confidence in the Scriptural accuracy and truth of what you assert will give you an unhesitating air of sincerity, which cannot fail to react favourably on the hearts and understandings of your hearers.

It is laid down by all teachers of rhetoric, that a public speaker, even when he speaks with authority, should exhibit a due respect, nay, a degree of deference to his audience;— if not to their moral character, at least to their understanding.[1] A young clergyman, especially, should not assume a high and authoritative tone. He should not say, "It is my duty to preach, yours to hear." "What I would have you to do is this." "I charge you now go home, and think on what I have said." When you have grown gray in your parish, you may speak with more authority, but still, an overbearing and dictatorial tone is always unbecoming, and will be sure to tell against you. It is also most proper to carry a tone of courtesy with you into the pulpit, and say, "Do I make myself understood?" instead of, "Do you understand me!"[2] However, you must not run into the con-

[1] Christian Observer.

[2] Fenelon, speaking of the early fathers, says, "Aussi trouve-t-

trary extreme, and forego the just authority which your office gives you. In avoiding the danger of being disliked, you must not incur that of being despised. Though you shun a dictatorial air, you should still speak with decision. It is very necessary to get above the fear of your audience, and acquire a self-possessed and manly air. "It seems," says a modern preacher,[1] "as if we were in general too timid: as if we were not sufficiently aware of the high ground on which we stand, and the important interests committed to our charge. If our situation in society is in general humble, yet here it is the highest and most dignified. He who stands where I now stand, is placed between God and the people, and trusted with the most solemn of all trusts. Whom need he fear; whom ought he to fear?" It may be prudent to qualify these remarks by the grave advice of Secker—"Every one should consider what his age, standing, reputation for learning, prudence, and piety, will support him in saying; that he may not take more upon himself than will be allowed him." The best rule for a young minister is, to take care to rest his authority on that ground, on which alone in truth it stands—the word of God. Whenever, therefore, you have occasion to use an authoritative tone, support it as much as you can by Scripture.

The next method which I propose, in order to enable you to win the respect of your hearers, is one recommended by Aristotle to orators in general, but particularly suited to the character of a clergyman; and that is, the expression,

on dans leurs écrits une politesse non seulement de paroles, mais de sentimens et de mœurs, qu'on ne trouve point dans les écrivains des siècles suivans. Cette politesse, qui s'accord très bien avec la simplicité, et qui les rendoit gracieux et insinuans, *fasoit de grands effets* pour la religion. C'est ce qu'on ne sauroit trop étudier en eux."—DIALOGUES SUR L'ELOQUENCE.

[1] Sidney Smith.

as occasion permits, of wise, amiable, and Christian sentiments, (γνῶμαι,[1] as Aristotle calls them.) You have observed the applause which follows the expression of noble and generous sentiments, even before a concourse of persons whose character little corresponds with the sentiment expressed. There is always in men's hearts an admiration of excellence in the abstract. Suppose a hustings-orator to quote from Pope's Homer the well-known lines,

> "Who dares think one thing, and another tell,
> My heart detests him as the gates of hell;"

the sentiment would be cheered heartily by the very men who would go up five minutes afterwards and give a fraudulent vote. You may avail yourself of this innate assent to what is good,—which, in a decent church congregation may be presumed to be stronger than in the audience just alluded to; you may introduce many shrewd and sensible, amiable and Christian remarks, which will be sure to find a response in the hearts of your hearers. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap."[2] "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."[3] "It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing."[4] St. Paul has a striking way of bringing in such sentiments, by using the first person, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal."[5] "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things."[6]

Sometimes the maxims of the world, all of them, indeed, *as such*, are contrary to Scripture. You may boldly notice

[1] Arist. Rhet., lib. ii. cap. 21.
[2] Gal. vi. 7.
[3] 1 Cor. v. 6.
[4] Gal. iv. 16.
[5] 1 Cor. xiii. 1.
[6] Ibid.

this fact, and still men's better feelings will generally respond. Thus our Saviour: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy,' but I say, love thine enemy." Few men will not acknowledge the beauty of the sentiment. So "the world says, 'Honesty is the best policy,' but I say, Be just and fear not. That man would not be very praiseworthy, who was honest only because it is politic."

It has an impressive effect on the minds of your hearers —and, doubtless also, will contribute to your own comfort and strengthening, if done with humble sincerity,—to offer up short ejaculatory prayers to God, supplication for the aid of his holy Spirit, or thanksgiving for his mercy. "O thou who knowest our insufficiency, assist us, we beseech thee." "Lord, write these truths on our hearts." "Send us, O God, thy holy Spirit, to enable us to profit by the consideration of this thy holy word." Preachers very often introduce a prayer of this sort after enunciating their subject. This is well-timed and pious, but should not recur in every sermon; and prayers introduced in sermons should be brief.

"Lastly," says Herbert, "be often urging the presence and majesty of God, by these and such like speeches, 'Oh! let us take heed what we do; God sees us, he sees whether I speak as I ought, or you hear as you ought: he sees hearts as well as faces; he is amongst us: and he is a great God and a terrible; as great in mercy, as great in judgment.'" Such sentiments as these will have a good effect both on yourself and hearers, for there is a constant reciprocity of feeling between you, which should be encouraged by all means.

By attending to what is contained in this letter and the next, you will acquire that which English preachers are, by

natural constitution, most deficient in, namely, *unction*. Recollect, I am assuming all along that you are single-hearted, and sincere, and under the guidance of the Spirit of God. "Without me," said the Lord Jesus, "ye can do nothing."[1]

[1] John xv. 5.

LETTER VI.

HOW TO GAIN THE CONFIDENCE OF THE HEARERS. SECONDLY, BY SHOWING A FRIENDLY DISPOSITION TOWARDS THEM.

You will have done much if you can establish in your hearers' minds an opinion of your Christian integrity; but you must endeavour to go beyond this, and give them reason to believe that you are not only generally well disposed, but *personally interested in their welfare and salvation.* To make this impression seems constantly to have been present in the mind of St. Paul. Feeling most deeply interested for his flock, he seems to have sought opportunities to let them *know* his affection for them; being well aware how important it was with a view to their persuasion.

With this view deliver your message, as it really is, a message of mercy—"glad tidings of great joy"—an offer of pardon and peace. Dwell often on God's love to man, and speak of it correspondently. Let "your doctrine drop as the rain, and your speech distil as the dew; as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass."[1] And imitate the goodness of God in your mode of propounding the message: make yourself a party concerned—which, indeed, you are—"as one that shall give account:" like the apostle, *beseech* them, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled with God,[2] as if your own salvation depended on their acceptance

[1] Deut. xxxii. 2. [2] 2 Cor. v. 20.

of your message. How affectionate are the expressions of St. Paul: "Though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel."[1] "Now I Paul, myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ."[2] Such words almost persuade before they convince.

Avail yourself of any community of feeling which exists between you and your flock. As fellow-christians you continually appeal to them,—as men who "have obtained the like precious faith" with yourself, are baptized into the same Church, and are partakers of the same glorious privileges and promises. But there are many modes of appeal to their natural feelings and prepossessions which will win their sympathy. Thus St. Peter—"The elders which are among you I exhort, *who am also* an elder." Sometimes you may address them as Protestants, as Catholic churchmen, fellow-countrymen, or introduce such topics as may remind them of these circumstances. The following is a true touch of eloquence, though some may deem it scarcely grave enough for the pulpit. It is from one of Waugh's sermons at the Scotch Chapel in London. His subject is the "bruised reed." "The good Shepherd," he says, "mends—not breaks—his reeds, when they are bruised. I have seen a *highland shepherd on a sunny brae*, piping as if he could never get old, his flocks listening, and the rocks ringing around; but when the reed of his pipe became hoarse, he had not patience to mend it, but broke it, and threw it away in anger, and made another. Not so our Shepherd; he examines, and tries, and mends, and tunes the bruised spirit, until it sings sweetly of mercy and of judgment, as in the days of old." This is very much in the style of Jeremy Taylor.

Another mode of winning the confidence of your hearers

[1] 1 Cor. iv. 15. [2] 2 Cor. x. 1.

is to identify yourself with them, as the apostle does continually, by the form of expression. Do not call *them* only weak and sinful, but include yourself. "In many things," says St. James, "we offend all."[1] Say, "May God have mercy on *us*," not on *you*. "Let *us* endeavour to turn this subject to *our* profit;" not, let *me* turn it to *your* profit. There is a beautiful instance in Romans i. 11, of the mode in which St. Paul foregoes the character of teacher, and assumes that of fellow-Christian:—"I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift." Then checking himself, as if he had spoken too authoritatively for the occasion, he adds, "that is, that I may be comforted *together with you* by the *mutual* faith both of you and me."

I am not sure whether the following passage on the Gospel invitation is not rather in the extreme—rather *too* honied. "It speaks its blessed invitation to all ranks, all ages, all hearts; to the grossest and most hardened sinner upon earth, as freely as to the most moral, amiable, unexceptionable character *in this house*." Which of the congregation would not have taken the compliment to himself? The following, from Mr. Howels, is liable to the same charge—"I bless God for having given to such an unworthy worm as I am one of the *most interesting congregations under heaven*."[2] When we seek to conciliate, we must take care not to flatter; unless, indeed, we can, like Dr. Donne, "with sacred flattery beguile men to amend."[3]

Another mode of compassing the same object is *præcipere laudando*;—to encourage and promote good dispositions, by assuming them, when we are able, already to exist. "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest."[4] "As touching the ministering to the saints,

[1] James iii. 2.
[2] Vol. ii. p. 203.
[3] See Walton's Lives.
[4] Acts xxvi. 27.

it is superfluous for me to write to you, for *I know* the forwardness of your mind."[1] "I have *confidence* in you through the Lord."[2] "But, brethren, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak."[3] "I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. Nevertheless—"[4] "Such *were* some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."[5] Great discretion is required in the use of this topic.

It was a favourite mode with the Apostles, to remind the converts of the high *privileges* to which they were called, and exhort them from that motive to act accordingly. "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?"[6] "Know ye not that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid."[7] "Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit."[8] In the same style you may say, "To men assembled, as you are, for the purpose of serving God, it is surely unnecessary that I should say more." "Men like yourselves, accustomed to hear the word of God," need not be told so and so; "you are too well acquainted with your Bibles to need that I should inform you." "Every good Christian, every honest man, every man of common understanding will, I am sure, agree with me." However in this, as in all other points, it is possible to fall into extremes. You must not take too much for granted. What you do take for granted

[1] 2 Cor. ix. 2. [2] Gal. v. 10. [3] Heb. vi. 9.
[4] Rom. xv. 14. [5] 1 Cor. vi. 11. [6] 1 Cor. vi. 2.
[7] 1 Cor. vi. 15. [8] 2 Cor. vii. 1.

should be only used as an encouragement to further advance: you may assume your hearers to be entitled to the privileges of the Gospel, but not to have availed themselves of them as they ought. You may speak to them as being *called*, but not *chosen*.

It is prudent sometimes to praise them on one point, that they may listen to your serious warning on another; you may assume their good intentions when you wish to convince them of error. "And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers."[1] Thus Cooper: "Now, my young friends, I would readily believe that you use this language in the sincerity of your hearts," (*i. e.* plead youth as an excuse for delay.) "I would give you full credit for thinking and meaning what you say; I would not suppose that in this matter you have any intention to deceive. But are you not yourselves deceived? In the most solemn way let me caution you against giving way to such delusive reasoning."[2]

Closely connected with this subject is a topic which demands our separate attention, namely, *how to manage reproof* in the best manner, so as neither to give offence by harshness or personality, nor to fail in making your hearers feel what you wish. There are some persons who think it right for a preacher to say, without reserve, whatever he thinks fit, however harsh it may be;—to blink no question, but "declare the whole counsel of God:" necessity is laid on them, woe is theirs if they "preach not the gospel." Rightly understood, these assertions are indisputable; but if we look at the example of St. Paul as a comment on his precepts, we shall find that he used the utmost caution and consideration to avoid giving *unnecessary* offence; and never propounded even the most important doctrines with a hardy unconcern

[1] Acts iii. 17. [2] Vol. ii. p. 85.

for the impression they might make. We should do well to follow his example. Offence may indeed be given by the truth, but it may also be given by the manner of propounding it. "If we are desirous to do execution," says an old writer, "and to make our way through all difficulties, we must pass the Alps with fire and vinegar. We must make brisk and bold assaults upon sinners."[1] I cannot say that I admire the *fire-and-vinegar* system; the one may chance to scorch and sear the heart, instead of warming or melting it; the other set the teeth on edge, instead of subduing the will. There is an old French proverb, that "a drop of honey will catch more flies than a pint of vinegar."

Never be bitter and sarcastic against the follies and vices of the world. The language of taunt and satire does not grace the lips of a Christian minister: such a tone of preaching will be apt to sour the temper of your hearers, and breed a disrelish for your doctrine.

You may say much more severe things, if such be your wish, in a temperate and gradual way, and with infinitely more effect, than if you assume the tone of anger, and place no restraint on your tongue. The most severe of St. Paul's epistles is his first to the Corinthians.[2] Read it over, and observe the judicious and gradual manner in which he introduces his reproofs. How does he first address them? As reprobates concerning the faith? corrupters of the truth? base apostates? No: he reminds them of their Christian privileges, and addresses them as "sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints."[3] "Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." After this affectionate beginning, see in how gradual a manner he prepares them to receive his rebukes. "Now I beseech you,

[1] Dr. Edwards.

[2] See St. Chrysostom, on St. Paul to the Corinthians, Homily 11.

[3] 1 Cor. i. 2, 3.

brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you."[1] "For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, that there are contentions among you;" "that every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ." Thus he brings forward the cause of complaint. How does he proceed? Does he now give the reins to his indignation? No: with peculiar tact he still suspends his reproof until he has shown them their error. He depreciates himself and his fellow-labourers in order to convince the converts of folly in calling themselves by any name but that of Christ. "Was Paul crucified for you?"[2] "Who then *is* Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted; Apollos watered; but *God* gave the increase."[3] "These things I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another."[4] "I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you."[5] Having thus addressed their understanding, and gained their hearts by kindness of speech, he proceeds to rebuke them with all authority, and he does it faithfully and forcibly. "I speak to your shame:"[6] "there is utterly a fault among you." "Nay, ye do wrong and defraud, and that your brethren. Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?"[7] But you should read and mark the whole epistle; it is not possible to give you, in these short extracts, a just notion of the tact and caution with which the Apostle writes; and of the gradual and temperate way in which he proceeds to win their hearts, until

[1] 1 Cor. i. 10, 11. [2] Ib. 13. [3] Ib. iii. 5.
[4] Ib. iv. 6. [5] Ib. 14. [6] 1 Cor. vi. 5.
[7] Ib. 7, 8, 9.

he comes at last to give them the whole measure of his rebuke, which otherwise, perhaps, they would not have borne. Thus, if you dash water rudely into a basin, it will flow over; but pour it in gently, and you may fill it to the brim.

The means of softening the asperity of rebuke are simply these:—to use friendly appellations to those whom you address; to show plainly and undeniably the reason and justice of your reproof; to express sorrow at the necessity laid on you, the imperative requirement of your office, the love you have for their souls, your care for their immortal interests; and, lastly, your hope and earnest desire for their amendment.

I have been supposing a case where it is *your object* to rebuke, and have shown you, by the example of the Apostle, how you may do it most effectually. But, in truth, rebuke is not generally suited to the pulpit. "The duty of a preacher is not so much to upbraid men for being bad, as to encourage them to be better."[1] Rebuke is better given in private than in public, and cautiously there. Serious expostulation, earnest appeal, *argumenta ad verecundiam*, are far more effectual than rebuke. Sometimes a powerful appeal is made by the expression of wonder that men should be so infatuated as to persevere in sin, and set at nought their high privileges. Another mode of speaking pointedly and severely, without adopting a tone of rebuke, is by *optation*, or expression of hopes and wishes. "O that men were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" "O that I could persuade you, my beloved brethren, to look carefully and honestly into your own hearts!"

In a word, men are more easily won by the mercies of God than subdued by his terrors. A congregation compelled too frequently to hear only the terrors and restraints of religion, will either not listen at all, or listen with hardened

[1] Tillotson.

apathy and incredulity. Even Cecil, excellent and humble-minded as he was, expresses himself thus:—"I feel myself repelled if any thing chills, loads, or urges me; this is *my* nature, and I see it to be very much the nature of others. But let me hear, Return again, saith the Lord, and I am melted and subdued." May not the neglect of this principle account for the empty churches of some very sincere preachers? If they observe some of their congregation, who once heard them attentively, gradually desert their church, would it not be well to consider whether it be not attributable to their mode of propounding the offers of the Gospel? It must not indeed be forgotten, that in no part of Scripture is represented, so strongly as in the New Testament, God's wrath against sin, and the sure punishment which awaits it; in no part is so unequivocally set forth the horror of that place "where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched:" and I am far from desiring you to keep back this part of your message. All I advise is, that you be careful to deliver it in such a manner as becomes the minister of a dispensation of mercy. You should "speak the truth in love:"[1] "knowing the terrors of the Lord," you should "*persuade* men."[2] You should take care not to drive from the fold of Christ those whom it is your duty to invite to enter. Some preachers speak of the wrath of God as if they were venting their own indignation. How different the exclamation of our Saviour: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"[3] How different the language of St. Paul: "For many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you *even weeping*, that they are the enemies of

[1] Eph. iv. 15. [2] 2 Cor. v. 11. [3] Matt. xxiii. 37.

the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction."[1] Some, again, without using asperity, yet speak in a cold, unfeeling, uninviting manner, as if they said, "Such is the decree of God; you know what to expect; act as you please, I care not." How different the earnest appeal of the Apostle: "We, then, as workers together with God, *beseech you also* that ye receive not the grace of God in vain."[2] How different the affectionate invitation of God himself by the mouth of the prophet: "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"[3] These are the models which you should imitate in your mode of address. The sternest reproofs, the most tremendous threatenings, should be in sorrow rather than in anger; and a tender concern and compassion for the sinner should ever accompany your rebuke and hatred of sin.

Let me conclude with an extract from Dryden's well-known "Character of a good Parson."

"With eloquence innate his tongue was arm'd;
Though harsh the precept, yet the preacher charm'd:
For letting down the golden chain from high,
He drew his audience upward to the sky.

* * * *

"He bore his great commission in his look,
But sweetly temper'd awe, and soften'd all he spoke.
He preach'd the joys of heav'n, and pains of hell,
And warn'd the sinner with becoming zeal,
But on eternal mercy lov'd to dwell.

* * * *

"To threats the stubborn sinner oft is hard,
Wrapp'd in his crimes, against the storm prepar'd:
But when the milder beams of mercy play,
He melts, and throws his cumbrous cloak away."

[1] Philipp. iii. 18, 19. [2] 2 Cor. vi. 1. [3] Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

LETTER VII.

HOW TO GAIN THE CONFIDENCE OF THE HEARERS, THIRDLY, BY SHOWING ABILITY TO INSTRUCT THEM.

The third qualification necessary for the preacher, in order to gain the confidence of his hearers, is *to establish a reputation for ability* (φρόνησις).

He may be a good man, and earnestly desirous of leading sinners to salvation—and after all, these are the most important points—still if his congregation look upon him as weak, and incompetent to his task, his influence will naturally be the less. How, then, are you, in your sermon, to give your hearers an opinion of your competency to teach them?

The first thing is to show yourself thoroughly well versed in the Bible. St. Augustin says, that the diligent study of Scripture is particularly necessary to those who are deficient in eloquence: "Huic ergo qui sapienter debet dicere, etiam quod non potest eloquenter, verba Scripturarum tenere maximè necessarium est." Knowledge of Scripture is by far the most important of all wisdom. Like Apollos, you should be "mighty in the Scripture," and like him, you will "mightily persuade." And you should study to *show* this knowledge; you should be always ready to confirm your arguments by Scripture texts and parallel passages, and to illustrate them by Scripture examples. You should dwell often on the connection of your text with the context,

showing the intention of the writer, the circumstances of the parties, and, in short, every thing which will elucidate and confirm it. You should often take comprehensive views of different parts of Scripture, explaining the connexion between the Law and the Gospel, tracing the hand of God in the events of the Old Testament, exhibiting his wisdom in the books of prophecy, pointing out the consummation of his scheme of mercy in the Gospel. You should be familiarly acquainted with every minute circumstance in our Saviour's ministry; be able to set forth the first construction of the Christian Church, and know all the circumstances under which the Apostles accomplished their journeys and wrote their Epistles. To all these subjects you should constantly direct the minds of your hearers, for the double purpose, of instructing them, and showing that you are competent to do so. The only Scriptural knowledge which you should not exhibit, unless it be necessary for the elucidation of your subject, is that of Scriptural criticism; for congregations are content with the received version.

I have selected the following passage from Jones of Nayland, as a beautiful instance of the plain and simple method of interweaving Scripture in your discourse: "When the seed of the word perishes, the fault is in the soil; and men think differently of the same thing, because the state of their mind is different. Some glorified God, and believed on Jesus Christ, for the new and wonderful act of raising Lazarus from the dead: others were so vexed at it, that they consulted how they might put Lazarus to death. Some rightly concluded, from the miracles of Jesus, that he was a teacher come from God; while others, offended with his person and doctrine, gave a contrary turn to the evidence of his miracles, and imputed them to the power of Beelzebub. Some, for the sake of his mighty acts, besought him to come and tarry with them; while others, for the same reason, besought

him to depart out of their coasts. Thus, also, the whole Gospel, while it is acceptable and delightful to some, as a savour of life, is a savour of death to others; like that pillar which gave light to the camp of Israel, but was a cloud of darkness to the Egyptians."

The next sort of knowledge, which you will find useful, is an acquaintance with the Fathers and other writers in the Church. But though you will do well to make yourself acquainted with them, you will not do well to study to *show* your acquaintance with them in the pulpit, at least when preaching to an ordinary congregation. The exhibition of other than Scriptural knowledge savours of pedantry, and does not appear to have a convincing effect.

The same may be said respecting all knowledge. It is very useful to have an intimate knowledge of Church History, of history in general, biography, arts and sciences. But the question now is with regard to the use which you should make of such information. My advice is, to employ it where needful, but not to exhibit it ostentatiously. It will furnish a wide range of illustration to assist your arguments, but should not be put forward in the same way as your knowledge of the Bible.

There is one species of knowledge which it is most important to acquire, and that is, *the knowledge of the human heart*—that knowledge which our Saviour so eminently possessed of "what is in man." If you call in a physician, and as soon as he has seen you and felt your pulse, he is able to tell your complaint and describe all its symptoms,—nay, anticipate *your* description, and suggest what you have not observed, you are naturally led to think that he is able to cure you. His evident acquaintance with your case, gives you a confidence in his discernment, and a faith in his prescription. "Come, see a man," said the woman of Samaria, "which told me all things that ever I did."[1] If your hearers per-

[1] John iv. 29.

ceive that you have an accurate knowledge of their hearts, if you can dive into the secret depths of the soul, drag sin to light from all her secret hiding places, point out the seat of the disorder, nay, if you are not only able to interpret these symptoms, but can detect others, of which they themselves were ignorant—as Daniel told the king his dream before he gave the interpretation; if you show this intimate acquaintance with the constitution and maladies of the human heart, men will naturally be disposed to believe the remedy which you propose to them. This discrimination of character is the part of your office in which you will at first find yourself most deficient. But it is not difficult with patience and observation to attain it. The Scriptures will unfold to you the corruption of human nature; a careful study of your own heart will confirm it; and the practical acquaintance which you will daily improve with the hearts of others, will gradually give you the competent skill in this most important subject. Besides the common flaws in human nature, there are many besetting sins and sinful habits peculiar to men's callings, and incidental to the times in which we live; many, also, connected with circumstances of your own particular flock. Apply this knowledge skilfully and unsparingly; only in so doing beware of roughness or causticity. If the physician gives his patient unnecessary pain, the confidence gained by his skill is often neutralized by the rudeness and clumsiness of his manner.

Never relax, in adding to your stock of substantial knowledge, both by reading and meditation. If you read without meditating, you preach only the thoughts of others: if you meditate without reading, you will gain but few new ideas. Yet it is necessary to bring out of your treasures things both new and old; and those great subjects which require constant reiteration, should be enforced continually by new arguments and illustrations. If your congregation

constantly hear the same things fall from you, and are invariably conducted in the same line of thought, they will justly consider you as ignorant and shallow, and will place the less confidence in your instruction. This is a very common fault with extemporary preachers.

Such are the means by which you are to seek to gain the confidence of your hearers, and obtain their esteem *as a good man,—interested in their welfare, and competent to instruct them.* It is very questionable whether a reputation for *eloquence* has not a bad, rather than a good effect. It sets persons on their guard against you, as if you had an intention to persuade them against their better judgment. From fear of this some persons will take only half-a-crown in their pocket when they go to hear a charity sermon; yet instances are recorded of eloquence being still triumphant, and compelling them to leave their watches and trinkets in default of money.

Before concluding this subject, I should observe, that it is a maxim of rhetoric, that the arguments which tell for the establishment of the speaker's own character, *are to be reversed with reference to an antagonist.* It is in favour of the orator, if he can show his antagonist to be a knave or a blockhead. Something in some degree similar to this must be resorted to by the preacher, when he is contending with a supposed adversary, as an atheist, or an infidel. Only, of course, all that he says must carefully be limited by the rules of Christian truth and charity. The mode of treating an adversary will in some degree depend on the nature of his hostility,—whether it results from ignorance or malice. The crime of scoffing at Scripture, or wilfully misquoting it, cannot be spoken of with mildness; though a sincere wish may be expressed for the sinner's conversion. "Be not hasty," says Jeremy Taylor, "in pronouncing damnation against any man or party in a matter of disputation.

It is enough that you reprove an error; but what shall be the sentence against it at the day of judgment thou knowest not; and, therefore, pray for the erring person, and reprove him, but leave the sentence to his Judge." Even in exposing the dishonesty, or reproving the hypocrisy of an antagonist, be not bitter. Employ language, and cultivate a spirit, as far as possible removed from that of reviews and pamphlets; which scruple not to call their opponents "knaves and blockheads," and to impute to them "infamous dishonesty," "despicable folly," "ridiculous nonsense," "measureless absurdity," and "to treat them with ineffable contempt." Remember the Apostolic precept, "In meekness instruct those that oppose themselves."[1]

[1] 2 Tim. ii. 25.

LETTER VIII.

ON ARGUMENTS—THOSE DERIVABLE FROM SCRIPTURE.

It does not fall in with my plan to give a philosophical analysis of the different sorts and divisions of arguments; for that I must refer you to the second chapter of Dr. Whately's Rhetoric, where the Archbishop treats, in his most luminous manner, a subject peculiarly adapted to his discriminating talent. All that I shall attempt will be to name the principal "tools" which are suited to the branch of oratory under our consideration.

The main strength of the preacher lies in a sort of argument peculiar to his branch, and that is, the *Apodixis Biblica, or appeal to Scripture*. In some respects, this is similar to the argument from authority, of which all moral writers may avail themselves; but Scriptural authority is, of course, of infinitely greater weight than any other. To exemplify the difference:—St. Paul, in addressing the Athenians on the overruling providence of God, says, "In him we live, and move, and have our being; as *certain also of your own poets have said*, For we are also his offspring."[1] As an argument, this could have but little force to compel the assent of the Athenians, since they acknowledged no Divine authority in their old poets. It was addressed to them as an illustration rather than a proof. But now, St.

[1] Acts xvii. 28.

Paul having so applied the words, we, who believe in his inspiration, may use them as a conclusive evidence and undeniable proof of the providence of God. What was before the opinion of fallible men has now received the stamp of Divine authority; it is no longer the saying of the old poets, but the word of God. Considered in this point of view, the subject-matter of the preacher differs from that of all other speakers. Others speak merely on contingencies; for moral arguments, without the authority of Scripture, are but a balance of probabilities: but a proof founded on Scripture authority, or legitimately deduced from Scripture, is equal in certainty to a mathematical demonstration. The Christian preacher, therefore, adopts a tone suitable to the character of his subject. "While the Roman orator," says Mr. Benson, "proceeds slowly and insecurely, faltering at every step, and evidently doubtful to what his reasonings may lead, the Christian inquirer assumes a bolder and more erect attitude, treads the ground as if he felt conscious of its firmness."[1] "Thus saith the Lord," is for him an absolute and conclusive authority, both for doctrine and precept: and though it may not be right for a preacher to *confine* himself to Scripture proof, yet there are many topics on which he will need no other syllogism, nor require any process of reasoning. A single undoubted text of Scripture will be enough.

And in the appeal to Scripture the preacher has this advantage over all other reasoners, that he meets his hearers on a wide field of common ground. There is an inexhaustible fund of propositions in common between them; for, although it may be said that many parts of Scripture are disputed by controversialists, yet there still remain an infinite number on which there can be no difference of opinion

[1] Benson's Hulsean Lectures, Lect. iv. vol. ii. p. 78.

between a church-congregation and their pastor. These propositions are the ground-work of his reasoning, and pervade every part of his discourse. Not only does he bring them forward as directly proving the point that he wishes to establish, but uses them as premises whereon to found other arguments for the same purpose. In most sermons by far the majority of arguments may be, directly, or indirectly, traced to Scriptural authority.

In the constant use of Scriptural authority there is also a moral effect, which with many congregations will conduce to persuasion. Religious persons, habitually conversant with Scripture, justly complain if there be too much of "the words of man's wisdom" in an address from the pulpit.

Arguments from Scripture have also this advantage, that they are direct. God loveth us, therefore we should love him. Christ died to redeem us, therefore we are his. Christ came to set an example, therefore we should follow it. The grace of God hath appeared, therefore we should deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live righteously and soberly in this present world.[1] There will, undoubtedly, be a resurrection and a judgment; therefore "be ye steadfast, unmovable:"[2] admit the premises, and there is no mode of escaping the conclusion.

For the use and success of Scriptural argument we have abundant evidence in the practice of the first preachers of Christianity. Of the convincing eloquence of Apollos we have already spoken. In the speeches of St. Peter and St. Stephen, you find constant quotations from Scripture, and appeals to the historical and prophetical writings of the Old Testament; so also in the Epistles of St. Paul,—not only in proof that Jesus was the Christ, but as authority for many minor points of belief and practice. "Say I these things as

[1] Titus ii. 12. [2] 1 Cor. xv. 58.

a man? or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn."[1] Our Saviour also frequently appeals to the authority of the Old Testament, "There is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust . . . for he wrote of me."[2]

With regard to the use of the Scriptures—it is not necessary to bring forward texts in great profusion; out of a multitude in point you may choose the most striking and unequivocal. Should you deem it advisable, you may mention that you have others in reserve. "The Scripture teacheth us in sundry places." "I might multiply quotations if it were needful."

With regard to the *manner* of quoting—some preachers, I observe, are in the habit of omitting to mention the author from which the text is taken, or even that it *is* taken from Scripture. When the quotation is well known, there is no need of mentioning whether it is from St. Paul or St. John. But when the text is not a familiar one, or your congregation not conversant with Scripture, then it is better to mention the author's name, lest it should not be recognized as being a quotation from Scripture. Another good rule is, to quote chapter and verse, or at least the name of the inspired author, when you introduce texts in the argumentative part of your sermon,—both as strengthening your argument, and also to give your hearers an opportunity of referring to them if they choose; but in the hortatory parts this is less needful. The use of a pithy and apposite text at the end of an argument not only gives vivacity to the style, but weight to the reasoning.

Lastly, in quoting Scripture, quote it, *not as the word of man, but, as it is in truth, the word of God.* Do not repeat

[1] 1 Cor. ix. 8, 9. [2] John v. 45.

it in a tone as if you considered it of less importance than the rest of your sermon; but quote it with reverence, solemnity, and emphasis.

Another advantage resulting to the preacher from the nature of his subject-matter, is the *argument from Scripture example*. Under this head I wish to include not only examples of persons, but also of things. And first, with regard to the former. The example of Christ is one to which you cannot too often appeal. Next to that of Christ, is the example of good and holy men recorded in Scripture, which is especially valuable when God's sentence upon their actions is distinctly stated. "Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment .... and that was counted unto him for righteousness."[1] "Seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, in blessing I will bless thee."[2] "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly."[3] More numerous are the examples of God's disapproval. "Thou hast done foolishly; thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God."[4] "In this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together, not for the better, but for the worse."[5] "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."[6]

The other class of examples which the preacher derives from Scripture are, more properly speaking, *Instances*, or examples of facts. Instances derived from uninspired history, or from passing events, are liable to objection, first, that they may not be true; secondly, that they may be exceptions, instead of instances. If you bring forward well known instances, and say that luxury ruins a nation, other nations may be pointed out which have long prospered not-

[1] Psalm cvi. 30. [2] Gen. xxii. 16, 17. [3] Job i. 22.
[4] 1 Sam. xiii. 13. [5] 1 Cor. xi. 17. [6] 1 Cor. x. 11.

withstanding their luxury. If you point out a drunkard who has ruined his health, and brought himself to the brink of the grave, another might, perhaps, be shown who was living in vigorous old age. You may, indeed, set forth the natural and obvious *tendency* of such sins, and point out instances, as warnings; yet the exceptions will have their weight against you. But when you appeal to the recorded dealings of the Almighty, "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning," you appeal with the certain knowledge that his ways are uniform and consistent. "If God spared not the Angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell .... and spared not the old world, but saved Noah .... and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample to them that after should live ungodly .... and delivered just Lot .... the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished."[1]

Exhaustless as you will find the mine of revealed truth in arguments and illustrations, and valuable as they are to the preacher, far beyond the materials derived from every other source, there is, however, a discretion to be employed in the use of argument even from Scripture. What I mean may be made clear by a passage from the fifteenth chapter of St. Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians: "If there be no resurrection from the dead, then is Christ not risen; and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain; yea, and we are found false witnesses of God. If in this life only we have hope, then are we of all men most miserable." Addressed to believers, like the Corinthian converts, this argument is conclusive. They were convinced of the resurrection of Christ, and of the truth of

[1] 2 Peter ii. 4—9.

Paul's preaching; therefore, on the truth of these premises, the Apostle safely grounds an argument for the general resurrection. But suppose him to have used the same argument to the Athenians; it would have fallen without force; they would have come to a directly contrary inference to what he wished; they would have concluded that his "preaching" was indeed "vain," and he a "miserable" fanatic. In the preaching of the present day it is well to use discretion, and not rest the whole of your argument on the truth of Scripture, unless you are quite certain that those whom you address are disposed implicitly to admit it. When the point in question is liable to controversy, to do so is clearly rash: but even on plain, fundamental topics, it is not, I think, prudent or reverential to place your argument in this form, or gage the truth of Christianity upon any one particular point, unless, indeed, it be one of vital importance. I do not like the following passage from Bishop Heber, who is arguing on the existence of Angels from the manner in which they are spoken of in Scripture: "Let us pause, in God's name, before we degrade the Holy Scripture into one interminable allegory; or, in the name of common sense, let us, at least, place the controversy on its proper footing, and, if the doctrine in question be really absurd or impossible, let us abandon, as an imposture, the religion which so authoritatively declares it." What need is there for the suggestion of such an alternative? If it should happen, as it undoubtedly will, with some portion of your congregation, that their faith is not built on a rock, an argument put in such a form, instead of proving to them the point in question will only be an additional reason to them to doubt the truth of Scripture.

With reference, therefore, to the character of modern congregations, it is necessary to use Scriptural and other arguments conjointly. Take, for instance, the subject on which

the Apostle is writing. Suppose it Easter Sunday, and you wish to prove the doctrine of the general resurrection of the dead; you might arrange your argument something in this form: "This day is to Christians one of joy and exultation, for we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord, who rose, the first fruits from the grave, giving an earnest that we also shall rise again. Before the coming of Christ the world was divided in opinion. The selfish and luxurious professed to disbelieve, but the soundest philosophers agreed with the mass of the people in believing that there would be a resurrection; and for the following reasons—(then give their reasons, which are *your a priori* arguments—inequality of lot in this world—pride of the wicked—affliction of the virtuous—inward longing after immortality,)—but still they had no certainty, nor was it possible they should, until the Son of God came from the bosom of his Father, and declared that God would surely judge the souls of men, (here insert Scripture texts)—and rose again himself in confirmation of his words. If after this we doubt, we must die in our unbelief; no other conceivable proof can be given, until the Archangel's trump awaken our slumbers in the grave." You may insert as many Scripture proofs as you please; only for the sake of some of your congregation, do not omit the others.

Partaking in some degree of the authority of Scripture is the *declaration of the Church*. "The Church is a witness and keeper of holy writ."[1] They shine as it were by a reciprocally reflected light. The Bible is of course the ultimate standard: but the canon of Scripture itself rests on the testimony of the Church; and the true interpretation and arrangement of its doctrine is received by us on the same authority. Since also your congregation acknowledge the

[1] Article x.

Scriptural validity of the Church to which they belong, you may quote the Articles, Creeds, and Liturgy, as proof undoubted.

Nay, even *you yourself*, as an authorized minister of the Church, are invested with something beyond your mere personal authority; at least, in the eyes of your congregation, to whom you are an appointed ambassador of God, to expound to them his word and will. "Let every minister," says Bishop Jeremy Taylor, "be careful that what he delivers be, indeed, the words of God, that his sermon may be answerable to the text; for this is God's word, the other ought to be according to it; that although in itself it be but the word of man, yet, by the purpose, truth, and signification of it, it may be in a secondary sense the word of God."

However, this assumption of authority belongs rather to one who, with irreproachable character and acknowledged ability, has for many years been the father of his flock. Expressions like the following often fall with peculiar weight from the lips of a venerable preacher—"I have visited many death-beds" "I have conversed with many repentant sinners." "I have watched the progress of youth to manhood;" or as David said, "I have been young, and now am old, yet never saw I the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread." Indeed, I know no argument which has more practical power of persuasion, than the solemn declaration of experienced age, when the weight of irreproachable character, and the gentle influence of Christian benevolence, are found united with the sacredness of ministerial office.

LETTER IX.

ON ARGUMENTS.

If we could entirely depend on the acquiescence of our hearers in every thing which can be proved from Scripture, and if we could rely on their acting conformably to their conviction, there would be no need of any other argument besides those which have been already spoken of. Indeed the necessity of writing sermons would be altogether superseded by the simple reading and explaining of the word of God. But, since we know that men's hearts are naturally prone to perverseness and unbelief, it follows that the testimony of Scripture must be enforced and strengthened by every means in our power. "We must consider not only what arguments *ought* to convince, but what *will* convince."[1] And this introduces us to nearly all the topics and modes of argument, which are common to other rhetoricians.

Still, there are some more applicable to the pulpit than others, and some which are altogether inapplicable. Other speakers scruple not to avail themselves of whatever argument may move their hearers at the time; but the reasoning of the preacher must be able to bear the test of reflection. It must be perfectly sound, honest, and unexceptionable. Our present purpose does not require that we should notice

[1] Hooker.

all the common modes and forms of argument which are open to the preacher, but it may be useful to speak briefly on some of the most prominent.

First, it should be observed that in all reasoning, especially in an address from the pulpit, there is much which cannot properly be called *argument*, because no middle term is employed. It might be very possible, in such cases, to *find* a middle term, which should show the connexion between the extremes of the proposition; but none is brought forward, and none is sought for. Neither is it *instruction*, because, in *that*, respect is had to the authority of the instructor: but here the preacher trusts to the good sense of his hearers, to assent to the truth of what he states. It is *an appeal to their reason* or common sense. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"[1] "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that made the eye shall he not see?"[2] "Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?"[3] Again, "We might as well doubt whether the sun were intended to enlighten the earth, or the rain to fertilize it, as whether he who framed the human mind intended to announce righteousness to mankind as his law."

Nevertheless, reason cannot entirely be relied on, because it is liable to be led astray by want of information, and distorted by evil habit, passion, and prejudice. Reason taught men for five thousand years that the sun went round the earth, and greatly were they surprised when Copernicus showed that they were in error. One would have thought that reason would prevent men from worshipping stocks and stones; but hear how deeply Isaiah[4] laments their want of understanding:—"None considereth in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned

[1] Gen. xviii. 25.
[2] Psalm xciv. 9.
[3] Rom. ii. 21.
[4] Isaiah xliv. 19.

part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree?" In the use, therefore, of this appeal to reason, whether pointedly made, as in the instances just mentioned, or whether in the mere silent assumption of their concurrence in your assertion, you must always bear in mind the intellectual and spiritual condition of your hearers. In some men "the eyes of the understanding are opened" by the Spirit of Grace; in others, the spark of reason is almost extinguished by sensuality, apathy, and sin. "They," says Mr. Davison, "in whom the sense of religion, the desire of holiness, integrity, and purity are the highest, and their minds most alive to such objects, will see, by *a real intuition*, the excellence of a code of doctrine, to which others will be feebly attracted by any sympathy of their feeling or judgment; or, it may be, will turn from it with the alienation and distaste of a mind opposed to its whole spirit. It is no more than this admitted principle, that evidence in moral subjects, is modified by the mind to which it is addressed."[1] In a church congregation, you may venture to *appeal* to a *reason* informed at least on the general principles of right and wrong, and to build your argument on this appeal.

Allied to the foregoing is an argument or mode of reasoning, which, if I may be allowed to invent a term hitherto unknown to rhetoricians, I would call *the argument from reminiscence*. It is when you appeal to your hearers' remembrance of former feelings, in order to persuade them to act, or to deter them from acting, *now*. "What fruit had ye then," asks St. Paul, "in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death." This sort of argument, though not capable of much variety, is very

[1] Davison on Prophecy, p. 73.

useful to a preacher; he may confidently appeal not only to his hearers' remembrance of the fruitlessness and discomfort of sin, but to the pleasure and satisfaction of serving God, the comfort of prayer, and of holiness, which some at least will be able to call to mind.

Advancing a little step farther, we cross the boundary which separates intuitive from deductive evidence. And the first sort of argument which comes under our notice is the *argument from experience.* Unlike the appeal to reason, which derives its chief force from our knowledge of the nature of the subject matter on which we employ it, experience rests on repeated observation, without any reference to causes. For instance, we observe that the barometer almost invariably falls before rain, and whether we know the physical cause or not, we act upon the strength of the experience. It is the same in morals. We know the difficulty of resisting temptations; we know the danger of bad habits, from our own experience. We know our own hopes and fears, comforts and disquietudes; and we doubt not, that, ordinarily speaking, other men, being of like passions with ourselves, feel in the same manner. And it should be noted that the force of experience outlives the memory of the facts on which it was built; the conclusion remains when the premises are lost; a fact, which accounts for the tenacity with which old people retain their opinion; you cannot overturn it by refutation, because they have forgotten the grounds on which it was formed.

The most glorious field for the operation of experience, is in confirmation of our faith. Here the power of experience is far beyond that of any other argument. What was it that filled the breasts of the Apostles with holy zeal, and made them devote their lives to the cause of the Gospel? What was it that animated the blessed martyrs with courage, nay, with joy and exultation? What was it that inspired

with heroic fortitude even delicate women when led to the stake, and sustained the faith of ignorant and illiterate persons under torture and death? Was it the force of argument and demonstration? No, it was simply the effect of experience. It was "experience that worked hope,"[1] and "hope was the anchor of their soul, both sure and steadfast."[2]

This, after all, is the strongest of all arguments, not only to the simple and illiterate, but even to the wise and learned. Without experience, the faith of the wisest men is but built on sand. They may have convinced themselves of the truth of the Gospel by the closest historical research; they may be able to prove it by the plainest moral reasoning; but, if experience be wanting, they lack that which alone is able to carry them through the ordinary temptations and trials of life. Without experience they will be found wanting in the hour of danger. That man only who knows by experience the power of truth, who has felt the adaptation of the Gospel to his own case, who has discerned the influence of religion working in him,—subduing the power of sin, controlling his passions, and purifying his heart; who feels himself brought nearer to God, and is conscious of elevation, of hope, of inward peace—that man, in short, who knows by experience that the Gospel has made him a better and a happier man[3]—he alone, whether he be high or low, learned or unlearned, has his faith based on a firm and sure foundation. He alone is clad in the armour of God, and will be able in the evil day to stand.

In some cases *testimony*, or the *recorded* experience and knowledge of others is a valuable argument. Its chief use is to establish past facts. It rests for its support on human veracity, and its value varies according to the credibility of

[1] Romans v. 4. [2] Heb. vi. 19.

[3] The Author believes that he is indebted for some of these sentiments and expressions to Bishop Wilson of Calcutta.

the witnesses. In some instances it may amount to moral certainty; as when a sufficient number of witnesses concur, who are unimpeachable in character, disinterested, and furnished with full means of knowing the truth; or when many concur without collusion, whatever their character may be; or when adversaries, or unwilling witnesses, agree. Revealed religion rests, in the first instance, on testimony, though the corroborative effect of internal evidence renders it, as we have already said, far more impressively convincing. The principal evidence of testimony which the preacher will have to use is that derived from Scripture, of which we spoke in the last letter; but besides this, there is the testimony of history. All the facts of history are derived from testimony; the accounts of things in other countries, the facts contained in books, those handed down by tradition, the experiments of science which cannot be made again, and the current events of the day—all these rest on testimony. *Universal consent* is a species of testimony, though perhaps, rather partaking of the nature of authority.

Another argument which may be useful to the preacher is *induction*, or the bringing forward a mass of instances. The argument in Paley's Horæ Paulinæ is an induction; one instance of unintentional harmony between the book of the Acts and the Epistles would prove nothing; but several hundreds are morally conclusive of their authenticity.

In some respects similar to induction, as depending on number rather than on weight, is what Archbishop Whately calls a "*Galaxy of evidence*:" that is, a body of evidence of different sorts, which convinces rather by the accumulated weight of the whole than by the force of any particular part. This is well put by Davison in the following passage: "Before an audience, many of whom are highly exercised in the application of their minds to a complex evidence, and to the decision of great interests dependent upon it, where

nothing but a complete conviction will satisfy, I speak with submission to their judgment, but with no fear of that judgment making against me, when I appeal to them whether they have not had occasion to know how conviction is improved by converging reasons, and the more so as those reasons arise from considerations differing in kind: how the succession of new matter of proof, even light in itself, reduces any supposed uncertainty left in the earlier stages of the inquiry; how the contingency of error is gradually excluded by checks upon the first conclusion, and the conspiring probabilities of a subject run together into perfect conviction. Let this reasonable process be applied to the examination of Christianity by men who challenge it to the proof, and I will not say *it*, but *they* have every thing to hope from the trial."[1]

This cumulative evidence is not, however, well suited to the ignorant and illiterate; if used at all before them, it must be carefully set forth, and fully, yet simply, explained. It requires great pains to make a jury comprehend a long train of circumstantial evidence; one tolerably conclusive argument will often have more weight than the most perfect process of coincident reasoning. So it is with the evidences of religion. The educated and practised reasoner will be more readily convinced by the process so ably described by Davison; but the illiterate man, not seeing the deductions which may be made from the weight of each argument separately considered, would be better satisfied with any one branch of evidence, if it were plainly laid before him. Yet there are cases in which cumulative evidence may be made sufficiently plain. Thus, in confirmation of prophecy: it would not have been a decisive proof of inspiration, for a prophet to declare with truth that Tyre or Babylon, Egypt or Jeru-

[1] Davison on Prophecy, p. 30.

salem, should one day be destroyed; but when we find it foretold that Tyre should become a place for fishermen to spread their nets on,[1] Babylon, the lair of beasts,[2] Egypt, the "basest of the kingdom,"[3] the Jews dispersed throughout the world, the Christian Church triumphant; and when we find not one only, but all of these predictions exactly fulfilled, an irresistible proof is presented to our minds. Bishop Horne, in his eighth sermon, sums up the principal predictions concerning our Saviour, and adds: "In the application of a single prophecy, especially if it be a figurative one, interest and ingenuity may raise many doubts and difficulties, but against the accumulated weight of evidence, *καθ' ὑπερβολὴν εἰς ὑπερβολὴν*, afforded by so many plain and literal predictions, all pointing to one person, all punctually and exactly fulfilled in Jesus Christ, and in him alone, no tolerably plausible objection can ever be made. Let candour and integrity, reason and common sense, be judges in the cause, and they must determine, they have already determined by the virtuous Nathanael, 'Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel.'"

[1] Ezek. xxvi. 14. [2] Jer. l. 39. [3] Exek. xxix. 15.

LETTER X.

ON ILLUSTRATION.

It is not easy to distinguish precisely between matter used by the speaker for the conviction of the reason, and that which is intended for explanation, or mere ornament—to say where argument ends and illustration begins. The frontier line must be drawn somewhere in the regions of *analogy*. Analogy is in part argument, in part merely illustration. In fact there are two sorts of analogy, as may be shown from the following examples mentioned in Aristotle:[1] "'Surely,' said an Athenian orator, 'you would not choose the chief magistrates by *lot;* you might as well choose the pilot of a vessel by lot.'" The other instance is this, "Once upon a time, a fox fell into a ditch, and could not get out; as he lay there, a swarm of insects settled on him and plagued him grievously. A good-natured hedgehog, coming that way, offered to drive the insects away. 'Stop,' said the fox, 'you had better let them stay where they are; for if you drive away these that are gorged with blood you will only make room for others which are thirsty, and will suck the more.' From this we learn," said the orator, "that it is better to let those, who have already well fattened on the state, keep their places, than drive them away, and get a set of lean hungry fellows in their stead." In the former of these

[1] Arist. Rhet. lib. ii. cap. xx.

two instances you will observe that there are three terms only, the *magistrate* and the *pilot*, both *chosen by lot*. In the other instance, there are four terms; the *insects* and the *fox*, the *placemen* and the *state*. Now the first of these is more like an argument, the second is a mere illustration. To choose a magistrate by lot, or to choose a pilot by lot, are great absurdities, because both are responsible offices, and ought not to be placed in the hands of incompetent persons. There is sound reasoning in this. But the story of the poor fox in the ditch, is manifestly nothing but an embellishment, and not intended as a serious argument. And yet I am by no means sure that it might not have quite as much effect, especially on an audience like the Samian populace, as the gravest demonstration.

The former sort of analogy, which consists of three terms only, seems to be much the same as what is termed *parity of reasoning*. Its force as an argument results from its being something more than a mere analogy—something approaching to resemblance.

The *parables in the Scriptures* are analogies of both classes, and may sometimes rank as arguments, sometimes as illustrations, [though, by the way, it is remarkable that when first delivered they were not understood by our Lord's disciples: in fact many of the parables, which are most plain to us, were to them *prophecies*.] In the parable of the sower, the analogy between the *seed* and the *word of God*, *thorns* and the *cares of life*, is so remote that though, when understood, it is most happy and forcible as an illustration, yet no sort of argument can be drawn from it. In the parable of the tares, on the other hand, there is some actual resemblance between the conduct of the reapers and the angels, from which we may draw an argument; for, as the reapers carefully gathered up the wheat because it was good, and burnt the tares because they were worthless, so will the

angels do with regard to good and bad men at the end of the world.

There is a common error in the use of analogy which you must be careful to avoid—that is, *the pressing it too far*. The analogy seldom holds in more than a few points; if you press it farther, you fall into error. If, for instance, because conversion is compared to a new birth, you were to say that it must be accompanied by *pangs;* or if, because the Church is the spouse of Christ, you were to say, as some preacher did, that he was bound to pay her debts, you would be going farther than you are warranted. So, in the parables of Scripture, it is wrong to suppose that all the circumstances will bear to be included. In the parable of the virgins, for instance, the point of analogy consists in the necessity of being watchful and prepared. If, because there were five wise and five foolish virgins, we were to argue that half mankind would be admitted into heaven and half excluded, we should infer what was never intended to be taught. Or if we were to argue (like Tillotson) that because the wise virgins had no oil to spare, therefore there could be no such thing as works of supererogation, although the conclusion be unquestionably true, still it would be unwarrantably inferred from the premises. We might as well infer that it was right to cheat and lie, because the master commended the unjust steward for having *done wisely*. In preaching, therefore, on the text, "Ye shall be fishers of men," do not say, as a certain preacher said, "In prosecution of this idea I propose to show you three things:—first, as the fish caught by these fishermen were taken out of the sea, so I shall show you what is that sea, out of which those spiritual fish spoken of by Christ are taken; secondly, I shall show the manner of taking them; and, thirdly, the effects of their being taken. For, as Christ made use of this metaphor, we may be sure that the metaphor *is perfect*, and that it must

be suitable *in all its parts*." On this false principle he goes on to teach "that the sea is the world; and as in the sea are things innumerable, both great and small—great leviathans, and so forth—so there are in the world. The people of the world have no taste for spiritual pleasures, as fishes have no enjoyment out of the water. Then as to catching them, there are unlawful nets—the net of mere morality: morality is like a bait without a hook. No, we should throw the Gospel net, and if we catch none this Sunday we may the next. Again, the fish, when caught, are taken out of the water, and never return; so God translates us into the kingdom of his dear Son. He that is caught in the Gospel never returns into the world, and in this I apprehend," says he, "that the beauty of the metaphor mainly consists. It is that which seems particularly to have been intended by it;" and so he goes on. This is "riding a metaphor to death."

There are constant temptations to a preacher to fall into this meretricious style;—as when God is called a *sun*, a *shield*, or Christ a *door*, a *way*, you may run out into a thousand minute points of resemblance, but it is a manifest wrong done to the simplicity of Scripture, to teach all these fancies as if they were derived from an inspired source. Yet this style has its admirers, of whom it has been justly said, that "interpretations of this sort will naturally be admired by the persons to whom they are addressed, in proportion to their ignorance."[1]

Analogy is of great use to the preacher; though more, perhaps, by way of illustration than argument. It may be employed from the simple metaphor or simile to the complicated treatise. When used as argument, it has been termed the *defensive armour* of oratory, being more useful in warding off blows, than inflicting them. Butler's Analogy is

[1] Christian Observer, iv. 132.

more calculated for the confirmation of the well disposed, than for the conversion of the infidel. Employed by way of illustration, analogy is striking and forcible. "It is found by experience," says Bishop Porteus, speaking of parables, "that this sort of composition is better calculated to command attention, to captivate the imagination, to affect the heart, and to make deeper and more lasting impression on the memory, than the most ingenious and most elegant discourses that the art of man is capable of producing."[1] With regard to the *time* for employing analogy, it is more suited to the argumentative than the hortatory part of a discourse: in pathetic passages there is no leisure for the comparison of ratios, and the balancing of resemblances.

The next sort of illustration which I shall mention is that from *example*. Many separate examples will amount to an argument by induction. Thus Heber, to prove the benefits which holiness bestows, not only on the children of God themselves, but on all who are even incidentally connected with them, says: "It is not Lot alone, who is rescued from the devoted city; his daughters, his wife, his sons-in-law, have all, for his sake, the same merciful offer of deliverance. It is not Joseph only, who becomes a prosperous man, and with whose daily toil the Lord is present to bless and prosper it; his Egyptian master finds his goods increased for the sake of his Hebrew bondman. It is not Elijah alone, who is miraculously nourished during the famine; his Sidonian hostess, also, has her barrel of meal and her cruse of oil prolonged, and herself and her child preserved from perishing. It is not St. Paul alone, the chosen vessel of the Lord, and the appointed ambassador of the truth to the shores of the Western ocean; it is not St. Paul alone, nor his comrades, St. Luke, and St. Timothy, nor the courteous Centurion,

[2] Porteus's Lectures, xi.

whose discerning kindness to his prisoner might have operated as some little claim to snatch him from the general calamity; the selfish mariners, and the brutal soldiers, are, moreover, given by God to the prayers and services of the Apostle; two hundred, threescore, and fifteen persons are preserved from death, by the presence of a single captive; and the vainglorious boast of the Roman, 'Cæsarem vehis,' was realized in the instance of St. Paul."

Even a single example will have weight in argument, if it can be assumed, that the circumstances are essentially the same with that which is to be proved; or if it be stamped with the seal of God's sanction or disapproval. But otherwise, single examples, especially those which are fictitious, can never amount to *proof;* yet, by way of *illustration*, they are of great use, fictitious as well as real, for they often explain better than any other mode of illustration what is the preacher's meaning; so that, joined with his authority, they have the power of conviction; for many of your congregation would rely implicitly on your word, provided only they understood it. You need never be at a loss for such illustrations as the following from Tillotson, which is of a sort very useful in plain congregations, though the language may be thought rather too familiar for the present day. "I will conclude this discourse," he says, "by putting a very plain and familiar case; by which it will appear what credit and authority is fit to be given to a guide, and what not."—(He is speaking of the Church of Rome.)—"Suppose I came a stranger into England, and, landing at Dover, took a guide there to conduct me in my way to York, which I knew before, by the map, to be north of Dover" We need not follow him in his journey. Suffice it to say that his guide led him over hedge and ditch, and through brier and bog, till he declared he would follow him no longer.

Lastly, there is the illustration from *authority*. Scrip-

ture authority is, as we have already said, the preacher's main strength. The authority of the Church (as contained in her creeds and formularies) is most valuable as a witness or interpreter of Scripture; other authority, though not altogether to be neglected, is but of comparatively feeble power. I mention it more for the purpose of limiting than recommending its use. When it is really to the purpose to know what has been said by profane writers on any subject, then, of course, their writings may be quoted, yet not so much by way of authority as of testimony. But quotation is little heeded. What do ordinary congregations care for the authority of *heathen philosophers*, *Roman historians*, "*poetical moralists of the Augustan age?*" Nor does it appear to me to bear with it much weight when the preacher appeals to a *late excellent prelate of our Church*, or a *celebrated Divine, now no more*. Some few there are who, "though dead, yet speak," and that with power; especially the ancient Fathers of the Church who conversed with the Apostles, or lived soon after their time. And the opinions of the Reformers of our own Church are important on some subjects. They are well quoted in the following passage from Mant's Bampton Lectures: "Let it not be understood for a moment that, in asserting the necessity of good works, in conjunction and equally with faith to our final acceptance, I attribute to such works the slightest shadow of merit. God forbid that I should presume to derogate from the value of the Redeemer's sacrifice, to rob Christ of his majesty, or admit any offering from his unprofitable servants to participate with him in making atonement and satisfaction for our sins. In this sense, indeed, it is always and universally true that 'we are justified by faith in Christ only.' We, therefore, plead 'the meritorious righteousness of Christ' (as the pious Burkett says) 'to answer the demands of the law;' but contend for a 'personal righteous-

ness of our own to answer the commands of the Gospel.' Whilst, with the judicious Hooker, 'we acknowledge a dutiful necessity of doing well,' with him also 'the meritorious dignity of doing well we utterly renounce.' Whilst, with the venerable Latimer, we believe that, 'as touching our good works which we do, God will reward them in heaven,' with him also we acknowledge that 'they cannot merit heaven,' but that it must be merited, not by our own works, but only by the merits of our Saviour Christ. And we esteem it no less truly than strongly said by the ever memorable Hales, 'Ten thousand worlds, were we able to give them all, could not make satisfaction for any part of the smallest offence we have committed against God.'" Sometimes you may quote a fine passage, or a pointed, pithy, or even quaint sentence from an old divine, if it is merely for the sake of enlivening the style, or if he has expressed it in such forcible language as you do not wish to weaken by a paraphrase. "Let us look," says Mr. Benson, "only to that awful world, where, as the strong eloquence of Chillingworth has uttered the thought, *if we shine not beautifully as the stars of God's glory, we shall glare fearfully as the firebrands of his wrath for ever.*"[1]

[1] Benson's Lectures, ii. 420.

LETTER XI.

HOW TO MOVE THE PASSIONS OR FEELINGS—FIRST BY INDIRECT MEANS.

To speak of an appeal to the passions, conveys to many people the idea of a mode of address, little in harmony with the soberness of a sermon. It reminds them of Peter the hermit urging the warriors of Europe to the crusades; or of some modern agitator inflaming the passions of the populace. True it is, that the bad passions are those most easily and most frequently excited, but it must not be forgotten that there are good passions as well as bad. Not only anger, jealousy, revenge, hatred, malice, and uncharitableness; but love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, faith, temperance, gratitude, exultation, hope,—all these partake of the nature of passions; though it may be more in accordance with common acceptation if we call them *feelings* or *affections*.

Persuasion is the end of all preaching; but it is clear that persuasion and conviction do not always go together. A man will sometimes be persuaded without being convinced,—he will act ἑκὼν ἀέκοντί γε θυμῷ—but much more frequently convinced without being persuaded. Conviction is, indeed, generally speaking, an essential preliminary to persuasion, yet it is necessary to go a step farther before the preacher's object is attained. It is not enough to convince

men how penitent and humble they *ought* to be, how grateful to God, how charitable to their neighbours; there is something beyond this: they must be persuaded to *be* so. The preacher has not performed his task when he has convinced his hearers of their sin and danger, but he must persuade them to forsake the one, and guard against the other.

And this is to be done principally by *moving the passions, or the feelings.* When the reason is brought to assent to the truth of any proposition, and the feelings are wrought upon, and urged to action—then, and not till then, will the will be gained, and a man be disposed to act, and by God's grace *will* act, in consequence of what he hears; and then, and not till then, is the preacher's task accomplished.

It is in this last requirement of their art, that English preachers are mainly defective. "Sermons," says Blair, "have passed too much into mere reasoning and instruction, owing to a distaste to fanatics and puritans. This will account, not only for the ineffectiveness of preaching in general, but also, in some cases, for the thinness of congregations; for people will not go to hear where they are not made to feel." I am the last person to advocate extravagant and passionate declamation; still, it is a Christian minister's bounden duty to aim at such a style of preaching as will move and win the affections of his hearers. It is said of Bossuet and Fénélon,—"l'un preuve la religion, l'autre la fait aimer." Surely, the latter is the point to which the preacher's exertions should be directed.

The appeal to the feelings or passions may be either *direct* or *indirect.* We will consider the latter mode first.

Of the indirect modes of appealing to the passions, an instance will occur to you in the parable of the ewe-lamb, by which the prophet stirred up the conscience of David.[1]

[1] 2 Sam. xii.

Indignation against the crime is surreptitiously excited, before any hint is given of the application of the story. Thus also Dean Stanhope, after commenting severely on the base ingratitude of the lepers,[1] who neglected to thank Jesus for their recovery, adds, "This passage is the very picture of mankind, and holds out to us a glass, in which almost every soul may see its own disposition but too exactly represented, too strongly reflected."

Of indirect modes of moving the feelings, and engaging the affections, a certain copiousness and vividness of *description* is most within the preacher's province. Thus, if he wishes to impress his hearers with solemn and piteous feelings for the accomplishment of God's wrath upon Jerusalem, he would not say only that Jerusalem was destroyed, but "that it was laid even with the ground, and her children within her," "the ploughers made long furrows;" "there was not left one stone upon another." Or if he wished to imprint on their minds a vivid feeling of the agony of our Lord, he would not merely mention the fact, but describe the circumstances and moral accompaniments. "Surely he bears our griefs, he carries our sorrows, he undergoes the chastisement of our peace. See his mortified look, his troubled gestures, see the bloody sweat—strange symptoms of the smothered pangs which rend his righteous heart. See him prostrate on the earth in anxious supplication."[2]

Not only strong feelings, but calm and pleasurable emotions of pity and interest are called up, in the same way, by simple description, and by prevailing upon the mind to dwell on details, however comparatively unimportant. Thus, in the description of Abraham on Mount Moriah: "And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife;

[1] Luke xvii.

[2] Horsley's Sermons, Serm. xix.

and they went both of them together. And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together. And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son."[1] How affecting are these minute and simple details! Who would leave out a single word?

Most sermons contain a good deal of description; some consist almost entirely of it. The last may, in some respects, be compared to a piece of sacred music. Suppose, for instance, you choose for your subject that interesting and beautiful portion of Scripture, the angels appearing to the shepherds, and announcing the nativity of Christ.[2] There is nothing here which needs to be proved or explained: all is simple narrative. The subject may be treated by describing the different circumstances which took place. As Handel, in his Messiah, dwells on each incident of this interview in a suitable strain of devotional music, and subdues the feelings, and melts the soul to holy and rapturous emotions: so, what he does by music, may the preacher accomplish by the power of description, by dwelling on each incident in so touching and vivid a manner, that a holy sense of the sacredness of the narrative, with all its sublime and momentous accompaniments, may be infused into the hearts of his hearers. This mode of treatment is very suitable to those parts of Scripture which are in themselves highly interesting: but it requires also a peculiar gift of preaching.

[1] Gen. xxii. 6—10. [2] Luke ii. 8.

Some writers object to any *appeal to the imagination*—at least "in the principal matters of the preacher's message." The author of the History of Enthusiasm instances the "awful process of the last judgment," as an improper subject of descriptive eloquence. "*On that day*," he says, "it will be sin, not a flaming world that shall appal the soul."[1] I cannot, however, think that his argument is correct. Though we may admit that *on the day of judgment* these physical terrors will be disregarded, and that, "though all that is visible be shaking, and dissolving, and giving way, each despairing eye-witness shall mourn apart over the recollection of his own guilt, over the prospects of his own rueful and undone eternity;"[2] yet it does not follow that the preacher should disregard these topics *now*. He must not, indeed, dwell on them *exclusively*, nor, as the author quoted justly remarks, *chiefly;* still, to omit them altogether, is to reject one of the most powerful auxiliaries, and greatly cramp his powers. For although, doubtless, the consciousness of sin will be infinitely the most appalling thought *when we stand before our Judge*, yet it is very far from being so while we are *living here.*

It is the most difficult of all tasks for a preacher to impress this truth, the guilt of sin, or the realities of the spiritual world, on men whose minds are immersed in temporal affairs, and whose senses are engaged in the scenes of this busy life. The most earnest descriptions of the enormity and danger of sin fail to touch the hearts of men with fear, unless enforced with every adjunct, and heightened by every circumstance which the preacher has at his command. And surely a preacher cannot be wrong in following the course of God's own word. If the terrors which are described in the Bible be a true description of things which

[1] See History of Enthusiasm, sect. 2. [2] Chalmers, Serm. viii.

will really happen, he is bound to declare them. If, on the other hand, they are figurative and imaginary, for what reason are they set forth in the Bible, but because they are among the means most suited to influence the will of man? We need not suppose that there will really be a "worm that dieth not," nor a "fire that is not quenched," yet surely these thrice repeated terrors have more powerful effect to excite the feeling of fear than the employment of the mere abstract terms for which they stand—everlasting pain, and endless remorse. The very subject in question calls forth from St. Peter that terribly awful description, in which he dwells with reiterated force on the material accompaniments of the day of judgment, "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and *the elements shall melt with fervent heat*, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and *the elements shall melt with fervent heat?*"[1]

It is clear, I think, that these images may fairly be used —and *that* without more restriction than the taste of the speaker suggests—as *subsidiary* engines to heighten the effect of a description, when it is the preacher's object to call up feelings of fear and solemnity. They are legitimately employed as *introductory* to an appeal to moral feelings; they prepare the mind for it, or rather spontaneously suggest it. Our hearts are so constituted, that physical and moral impressions act reciprocally upon each other. Nor can the feelings be strongly moved unless the imagination is appealed to. Read any interesting work of fiction, and

[1] 2 Pet iii. 10, 11, 12.

you will find the author invariably availing himself of this mode of introducing or heightening the impression. When a scene of love and happiness is to be depicted, it is sure to be "a delightful day, sun shining, not too hot, air balmy, birds singing, all nature gay, and the influence is quickly felt"[1] by the persons who figure in the scene. When, on the other hand, sorrow and misfortune are approaching, it is a drizzling rain in November, or snow storm in January. Spring is always the season for hope and expectation, Autumn for calm and sober reflection. How admirably is the character of the master of Ravenswood worked up, and our sympathy sustained by the description of his dreary tower on the Wolf's Crag—his stern poverty, and tall dark form! Nay, even in the realities of life, who does not feel that the accompaniment of a bright sun adds not a little to the happiness of witnessing the marriage of a friend, and that a cold dreary rain increases the melancholy feeling of a funeral?

My conclusion is, that descriptions of natural phenomena, and material accompaniments, instead of only affecting the imagination, may, *through the imagination, most powerfully influence the heart*, whether for good or evil; and, therefore, that the preacher will do well to avail himself of them—not to the exclusion of moral appeals from their due prominence, but as heightening auxiliaries.

Of course bad taste, and affectation, and laboured details, and language too highly wrought and verbose, in this, as in every other case, impair the effect: and I am ready to allow that there is a great temptation to preachers to run into these errors. But the liability to abuse, does not impeach the general usefulness of such topics.

Since the day of judgment has been the instance hitherto

[1] Miss Edgeworth.

referred to, let us see in what manner this subject has been treated by different writers: "Whoever you are that read this," says an old writer, "I beseech you, think with yourselves what affections it would move, should you now hear the sound of the last trump, should you feel the dead that lie here buried begin to stir, and heave under you, should you see now a tombstone removed, and then a grave thrown open, here a head, and there an arm, here one limb, and there another, thrust out of the earth; the throng and multitude of some already risen, some just rising, and all hastening to judgment! Would not such a spectacle fright you with more serious thoughts, than perhaps the most of you have even when you are in God's presence? *What security have I for my soul? what interest in my Saviour?* what account can I give unto my Judge? Oh! what sentence shall I hear by-and-by pronounced upon me? Thus would you all, with amazed and trembling hearts, expect the issue of that great and terrible day of the Lord, which now you put far away from you; and, it may be, much farther in your own thoughts, than God hath done in his decrees. Well, sirs, stir up the same affections now; you will not be much deceived, if you think you hear and see these things present before you this hour. There are but a few years that make a difference between what is, and what shall be; and when they are struck off, death and judgment, and eternity, are really present with you—as really present as the things you behold with your eyes. Could we but keep that sound always in our ears, which St. Jerome witnesseth was always loud in his, 'Surgite mortui,'—Arise ye dead, and come away to judgment, the Judge is set, the books are opening, doom is passing—how would this nip all our carnal jollity and childish pride, and make us careful to improve that time, to employ those talents, to regulate those thoughts, those discourses, those actions, for which we must shortly

give so narrow an account to a strict and most impartial Judge."[1]

The first part of this extract will remind you, I dare say, of those pictures of the day of judgment, which you see in old Bibles. Whether Bishop Hopkins had one of them open before him, or whether *they* were taken from his description, I know not; yet I can well imagine, that the same persons who, two hundred years ago, admired those pictures, would not have seen any thing ludicrous or offensively particular in the good Bishop's description of the day of judgment. And, this feeling being excluded, I can suppose that the mixture of material and moral ideas, must have had a weighty, and even an appalling effect. Of course I do not recommend it for imitation now: minute detail in such subjects is exploded, and obscurity is judged to be more suitable to the sublime. The pictures in our old Bibles are admired only by children, and the conceptions of Martin have usurped the place of those of Michael Angelo. You must conform, in some degree, at least, to the public taste.

The following passage is from a more modern writer, and consists principally in moral description: "Where is the man who can abide the strict examination which is now to be instituted? Where is the heart which, laid open to its utmost recesses, will not appear loaded with deformity? When the most secret motives in which the actions of men have originated, are exposed to the view of an assembled world, how many deeds, that seemed the children of virtue and charity, will be claimed as the offspring of vanity and pride! Innumerable will be the schemes of wickedness which this important hour will bring to light. Schemes that never, perhaps, ripened into execution; which have long ago escaped the memory of the projector himself, but whose guilt

[1] Bishop Hopkins.

remains, and whose punishment is reserved for this day: criminal dispositions, which were never embodied into deeds of vice; hatreds and animosities, which only lacked an opportunity to be written in characters of blood: vicious and unholy thoughts, which solicited, but found not, the means of gratification: meditated crimes, of which we could scarcely have supposed ourselves capable—will now be brought home to the consciences of men. And when we, at length, are made known to ourselves, a mystery of iniquity will be revealed, that will overwhelm us with confusion! The task, which we had so often postponed from day to day, must at length be performed; whatever reluctance we may feel to the duty, we must now enter into our own hearts, where we never, perhaps, delighted to dwell; and we must submit to review those shameful desires and inclinations, those vain delusions, and those mean and secret motives, which, even without our knowledge, were the real, but invisible principles of action.

"Nor will the scrutiny of this awful day be confined to the actual and meditated crimes of mankind; it will also extend to every omission in our duty of which we have been guilty. . . . . How many will find, when too late, that where something might have been done towards their eternal salvation, nothing has been effected, and, as unprofitable servants, they shall be cast into utter darkness."[1]

Though there are some home-thrusts, and penetrating allusions in this extract; yet, to my mind, it falls short of the powerful effect made by a more picturesque description; it fails to impress the mind with that wholesome fear which is called forth by the following passage from Dwight:—

"Alone in the midst of millions, surrounded by enemies only, without a friend, without a comfort, without a hope, he

[1] Bryce's Sermons.

lifts up his eyes, and, in deep despair, takes a melancholy survey of the immense regions around him: but finds nothing to alleviate his woe, nothing to support his drooping spirit, nothing to lessen the pangs of a broken heart.

"In a far distant region he sees a faint glimmering of that Sun of Righteousness which shall never more shine upon him; a feeble dying sound of the praises, the everlasting songs of the general assembly and Church of the first born, trembles on his ear, and, in an agonizing manner, reminds him of the blessings in which he might have also shared, and which he voluntarily cast away. In dim and distant visions those heavens are seen, where multitudes of his former friends and companions dwell—friends and companions, who in this world loved God, believed in the Redeemer, and, 'by a patient continuance in well-doing, sought for glory, honour, and immortality.' Among these, perhaps, his own fond parents, who, with a thousand sighs and prayers and tears, commended him, while they dwelt here below, to the mercy of God, and to the love of their own divine Redeemer. His children, also, and the wife of his bosom, gone before him, have, perhaps, fondly waited at the gates of glory in the ardent expectation, the cheering hope of seeing him, once so beloved, reunited to their number, and a partaker in their everlasting joy. But they have waited in vain.

"The curtain is now drawn, and the amazing vast is unbosomed to his view. Nature, long delayed, sinks under the united pressure of sickness, and sorrow, and despair. His eyes grow dim, his ears deaf, his heart forgets to beat, and his spirit lingering, terrified, amazed, clings to life, and struggles to keep possession of his earthly tenement. But hurried by an unseen Almighty hand, it is irresistibly launched into the unseen abyss. Alone and friendless it ascends to God, to see all its sin set in order before its eyes; with a gloomy and dreadful account of life spent only in sin, without

a single act of piety, or voluntary kindness to men, with no faith in Christ, and no sorrow for iniquity, it is cast out, as wholly wicked and unprofitable, into the land of darkness and the shadow of death, there to wind its solitary journey through regions of sorrow and despair, ages without end, and to take up for ever the gloomy and distressing lamentation of the text—'The harvest is past, the summer ended, and I am not saved.'" The man that is not moved,—even by reading this description, would be moved by nothing.

Let me observe, however, that as there are few persons who can *compose*, so there are still fewer who can properly *deliver*, a passage like the above. Unless, therefore, you are confident that your power of expression will bear you out in the delivery of such heart-stirring appeals, and, on the other hand, that your feelings will not burst forth so strongly as to impede your utterance, you had better content yourself with a more moderated tone.[1]

Descriptions of virtue and vice are amongst the most powerful means of moving the feelings. "To picture a vice so as to make it ugly to those who practise it, and a virtue so as to make it loved even by those who love it not, will often lead men to forsake the one and seek the other." Who can hear St. Paul's description of charity without a feeling of love and emulation? Under this head will come *description of character*, which is one of the most certain modes of touching the heart,—more certain, perhaps, than description of virtue and vice; for concrete terms are commonly more plain and forcible than abstract. When a bad man hears his own character described, when the veil is torn from his heart, his secret wishes and motives laid bare, his meanness, vileness, worthlessness, set forth before him, and the results of a continuance in such a state undeniably proved, he cannot

[1] Compare the conclusion of Bishop Horsley's third sermon.

but be touched with fear and shame, if not contrition. So, when a good man hears a description which agrees with his own experience, when the triumphs of grace over nature are depicted, the power of the Holy Ghost to subdue sin, to assist, comfort, exalt, and spiritualize; and when the cheerful course and glorious prospects of a Christian are pictured, in all which he recognizes a just representation of his own feelings, it cannot fail but that he will be cheered and strengthened in his course, and filled with hope and resolution.

Nothing adds more to the power of description, or indeed to any other mode of address, than to *connect it with the personal feelings and circumstances of your hearers;* as in the following touching passage, from a sermon of Gallaudet, preached for the deaf and dumb at the Oratoire in Paris: "Parents, make the case your own. Fathers and mothers, think what would be your feelings were the son of your expectation, or the daughter of your hopes, to be found in this unhappy condition. The lamp of reason already lights its infant eye, the smile of intelligence plays upon its countenance, its little hand is stretched out in significant expression of its wants, the delightful season of prattling converse has arrived; but its artless lispings are in vain anticipated by paternal ardour; the voice of maternal affection falls unheeded on its ear; its silence begins to betray its misfortune, and its look and gesture soon prove that it must be for ever cut off from colloquial intercourse with man, and that parental love must labour under unexpected difficulties in preparing for its journey through the thorny world on which it has entered." There are many modes in which personal feelings may be touched. Proximity of time or place, imminent danger, immediate advantage; these and similar circumstances should be pressed into the service of the preacher. The presence of the cholera was the occasion of more awakening appeals to sinners than any other recent circum-

stance, and, we doubt not, was blessed to the salvation of many souls.

It is surprising what effect even a trifling incident, well introduced, will sometimes cause. I remember hearing a charity sermon for a school, in which the preacher stated, that if the funds of the institution were not augmented the managers would be obliged to discontinue "the little rewards" which had been usually given to the children. It was a simple, yet pathetic touch. The effect of this appeal was obvious at the time, and I have no doubt contributed to fill the plates.

LETTER XII.

HOW TO MOVE THE PASSIONS OR FEELINGS—SECONDLY, BY DIRECT MEANS.

We have now to consider the *direct* modes of moving the passions or affections.

The first is to persuade or convince by undeniable arguments, or forcible representations, that a thing is, on the one hand, laudable, useful, safe, pleasant, necessary, possible, practicable; or, on the other hand, base, pernicious, dangerous, painful, needless, impossible, impracticable. If, for instance, you can show the impracticability of serving God and Mammon, the impossibility of escaping God's wrath without repentance, the folly, shame, danger, unprofitableness, enormity of sin; or if you can prove how pleasant are the paths of religion, how desirable the rewards of heaven, how possible, by God's gracious mercy, even for the greatest sinner to turn from his wickedness and save his soul alive; if you can establish in the mind of your hearers a belief of such things as these, you will have made no inconsiderable step towards moving them; at any rate you will have prepared their hearts for favourable impressions.

The next mode of moving the passions is by direct appeal, or address, including exhortation, warning, expostulation, remonstrance, consolation, reproof, encouragement, and

the like; all of which may, for our present purpose, be sufficiently designated under the general name of *exhortation*.

According to the taste or style of different preachers, or in compliance with the nature of the subject on which they are treating, a sermon may consist almost wholly of exhortation, or contain little or none. When the matter in hand is, of itself, of a moving and spirit-stirring character, the preacher may judge direct exhortation unnecessary; on the contrary, if the subject be one on which the hearers are already convinced, or well informed, then the main part of the sermon may consist in exhortation, and encouragement to act up to their conviction and knowledge.

And here I must not omit to mention an important distinction between those parts of a sermon where the object is to convince the understanding, and those where the intention is to move the heart and feelings; in short, between argument and exhortation. In the first, the object is avowed; in the second, concealed. When I say *concealed*, I do not mean that there is any thing to be ashamed of; on the contrary, it is the obvious and professed duty of the preacher to do all he can to awaken the feelings and open the heart. But it is a maxim of rhetoric, that, in order to attain this object, the speaker must on no account avow it at the time; for there is in men's hearts a natural pride, and perverse disinclination to yield their feelings to another. Therefore, when you wish to move their heart, you must not say, "Now I am going to exhort you,"—"Now I am going to tell you what feelings you ought to have on this occasion,"—"This should call forth your faith, this your gratitude or devotion,"—for it is an assumption of superiority which they will not bear. There is a great difference between showing the hearers that they *ought* to be moved, and actually moving them; avowed and expected exhortation is generally the surest mode of defeating your object. The human heart

fortifies itself against direct attack; so that, to be sure of success, you must come upon it unawares. Make never so earnest an appeal, and, if it is not well timed, it will not succeed. If you begin to speak warmly before your hearers are similarly affected, they will take it as a matter of course—a part of your business; and will not much attend: or you will appear to them something like "a drunken man in the midst of sober."[1] Or, if your address be so warm as to command attention,—not being prepared to receive it, they will suppose it is all meant for their neighbours.

I need scarcely remind you of the often quoted maxim of Horace with reference to the effect of an appeal to the passions;

> "Si vis me flere, dolendum est
> Primùm ipsi tibi."

Whatever passion or feeling you wish to excite, whether it be joy, sorrow, love, hatred, pity, or indignation, you must show by your tone and expression, as well as by your words, that you are yourself affected in the way you wish your hearers to be affected. If you are unmoved and indifferent, they will be the same. A few sentences warm from the heart, and delivered with corresponding earnestness, are often sufficient; indeed, generally speaking, they are better than many; for it is difficult to keep up for long a sustained warmth of expression, and if the fervour subsides, the address instantly becomes frigid, and your hearers will be unmoved. Judicious fanning keeps alive the flame, but too much may chance to extinguish it. Do not, however, check the stream of enthusiasm too soon, for every drop, if genuine, is precious. In this point the extemporaneous preacher has a manifest advantage, for he can say more or less according as his own feelings bear him out, or his hearers are in a fit frame to receive it.

[1] See Whately's Rhetoric.

It is obvious that the style and manner of those parts of a sermon which are intended to move the passions should be very different from those which are suitable to argument and instruction. In an address to the passions, the preacher must put forth his whole energy; his address must be more than ordinarily earnest and pathetic, and his language of a bolder and freer character. Whether from constitutional temperament, or habitual reserve, some very good men appear wholly incapable of that fervid and impassioned expression which is so necessary for this purpose. It is highly important for a young clergyman to struggle from the very beginning of his ministerial duties against a coldness of manner, which, if not corrected, will grow, and fix itself upon him.

At the same time he must guard against mere declamation. To attempt to fix any standard, or to draw a line where right enthusiasm ends, and ranting and bombast begins, would be fruitless. I might write you down a sentence, which, when you read it calmly, detached from the rest, would sound more like raving than preaching, and yet it might by no means follow that it should have seemed so to an audience which was worked up into enthusiasm. At such times highly figurative and even hyperbolical language may be rightly used, at least by preachers whose manner will bear them out. "Ubi se animus cogitationis magnitudine levavit, ambitiosus in verba est, altiusque, ut spirare, ita eloqui, gestit, et ad dignitatem rerum exsurgit oratio: oblitus tum legis pressiorisque judicii, sublimis feror et ore jam non meo."[1] "When the mind is occupied by some vast and awful subject of contemplation it is prompted to give utterance to its feelings in a figurative style, for ordinary words will not convey the admiration, nor literal words the reverence which possess it."[2]

[1] Seneca. [2] Newman.

With all due allowance, indeed admiration, for right enthusiasm, I cannot conceive that any congregation could be edified by such passages as the following, which are taken from the published sermons of an admired preacher. The first is an illustration of the text—"Through death Christ Jesus destroyed him that had the power of death." "Death came against the Mediator: but, in submitting to it, Christ, if we may use such image, seized on the destroyer, and, waving his skeleton form as a sceptre over this creation, broke the spell of a thousand generations, dashing away the chains, and opening the graves of an oppressed and rifled population."[3] The next is from a sermon on the resurrection: "He went down to the grave in the weakness of humanity, but, at the same time, in the might of the Deity. And, designing to pour forth a torrent of lustre on the life, the everlasting life of man, oh! he did not bid the firmament cleave asunder, and the constellations of eternity shine out in their majesties, and dazzle and blind an overawed creation. He rose up, a moral giant, from his grave-clothes, and, proving death vanquished in his strong-hold, left the vacant sepulchre as a centre of light to the dwellers on this planet. He took not the suns and systems which crowd immensity in order to form one brilliant cataract, which, rushing down in its glories, might sweep away darkness from the benighted race of the apostate. But he came forth from the tomb, masterful and victorious; and the place where he had lain became the focus of the rays of the long hidden truth; and the fragments of his grave-stone were the stars from which flashed the immortality of man."[1] It may be well to observe that the author of these astounding passages, these "brilliant cataracts" of words, has of late somewhat reined in the fury of his genius, and, as might have been safely predicted, his descent from the regions of

[1] Melville's Sermons, pp. 19, 26. [2] Ib. pp. 146, 7.

the clouds has not in the least impaired the real energy of his preaching.

In all appeals to the passions, whether direct or indirect, you should remember this circumstance—*that one strong feeling will counteract another*. Thus, if you paint too minutely circumstances of horror and misery, disgust will sometimes drive away pity. A clean decent looking beggar is commonly more successful in his profession than one who exposes his undressed wounds. Excessive fear will cast out hope, and perfect love dispel fear. Of this principle the preacher has many opportunities to avail himself. Thus, in order to correct the influence of worldly passions and attachments, it will generally prove more effectual to cherish a love for heavenly things, than to rail in direct terms against vanity and worldliness. To turn the hearts of men from drunkenness and vice you will best describe the comforts of a sober and religious life. To attack unbelief with greatest force, you should dwell on the blessedness of Christian hope.

Since the object of the preacher is not merely to convince and affect, but to do so with reference to something farther, to inspire an active principle of conduct, it is better for him to dwell principally on such topics, and awaken such feelings, as will elate and excite, rather than distress, the soul. Sorrow, fear, shame, are naturally dull and torpid; they depress the mind, and indispose it for enterprise; but faith, hope, emulation, love, joy, charity, elevate the soul, and prepare it for active exertion.

Such are the principal means whereby the preacher must seek to move the will of his hearers. But his object is not even then accomplished. For though the spirit of man may be willing, yet, alas! the flesh is weak. To have gained the will is much, but it is no security that you have changed the heart. "To will," says St. Paul, "is present with me,

but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would, I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do."[1] While, therefore, the orator who addresses men on the affairs of this present world may boast that he can deal successfully with their spirit, and sway their passions, and work them to his purposes; the preacher, whose object is incomplete if he does not change their hearts, must, after all his most earnest and faithful efforts, still humbly look for success to that Spirit of truth who worketh as he listeth, and who alone can fashion and mould the hearts of men, and turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God.

[1] Rom. vii. 18, 19. See also South's Serm. on Matt. xiii. 52.

PART II.

LETTER XIII.

ON STYLE—GENERAL REMARKS.

It may appear to need some apology, that I should take upon myself to advise you on the subject of style. Having passed with credit through a public school and the university, it might be supposed that you were perfect in this respect. But, if things are managed as they were in my time, such a supposition would be far from correct. So little attention was then paid to English composition, either at school or college, that many a man of fair ability passed through both, without having turned his mind to the subject, beyond writing a few themes which were never looked over.[1] Abundance of pains was lavished on verse-making, and some attention paid to Latin prose; which, though an excellent help, and a good foundation for composition in

[1 This language is scarcely too strong to describe the case of many of the graduates of a large number of American colleges. It by no means unfrequently happens that young men, on entering our theological seminaries, fresh from college, are found deficient in the very rudiments of composition.]

general, certainly is not sufficient of itself to teach the art of writing sermons.

Whether any improvement has taken place in these matters I am not aware. But even taking the other side of the question, and supposing every attention paid to English composition;—supposing that you have received instruction from a man of taste, and have been carefully trained up in all the mysteries of essay-writing, still I apprehend that a few hints on the sort of style suited for sermons will not be without use. Style may be too good, as well as too bad; too refined and polished, as well as too rough and homely. "Elaborate composition is so far from being necessary to the success of public discourses, that in many situations a person of delicate and refined taste will be obliged to maintain a severe conflict between his duty and his habits, before he can come to be useful from the pulpit."[1] I do not know whether a young clergyman who has paid the greatest attention to style in essay-writing, and has distinguished himself by the beauty of his composition, would not perhaps be full as likely as any other to send his congregation to sleep, and that partly by the too great refinement of his style. Parochial preaching has a style peculiar to itself; and it is one of some difficulty to attain. The young curate, fresh from the honours of his degree, has often much to learn, as well as unlearn, when he begins "the simple task of saving souls." The problem is, to keep the right medium between bad taste and too great refinement. In preachers of the Church of England there is a tendency to the latter fault: their style is often so smoothed down and polished that nothing impressive and striking is left. The following is Johnson's opinion on this matter:—"I talked," said Boswell, "of preaching and of the great success which those

[1] Bishop Sumner's Apostolical Preaching, pp. 9, 10. First Edition.

called Methodists have." Johnson: "Sir, it is owing to their expressing themselves in a plain familiar manner, which is the way to do good to the common people, and which clergymen of genius and learning ought to do from a principle of duty, when it is suited to their congregation; a practice for which they will be praised by men of sense. To insist against drunkenness as a crime, because it debases reason, the noblest faculty of man, would be of no service to the common people; but to tell them that they may die in a fit of drunkenness, and show them how dreadful that would be, cannot fail to make a deep impression. Sir, when your Scotch clergy give up their homely manner, religion will soon decay in that country."[1] This opinion, though in the main just, will require some qualification. For it is very possible to preach plainly, without preaching like Methodists.

And here I should mention, that the shortest mode of acquiring the style and way of thinking, so necessary for usefulness in your parish, is to begin your office by very frequent intercourse and conversation with your parishioners, with a view to learn their habits of thought, and what degree of knowledge they possess. You will find much more ignorance than you expected. "Pray, sir," said a parishioner to his minister, "who are those *primitive* Christians, about whom you said so much in your sermon yesterday?" He was thinking, probably, of the *primitive Methodists,* just established in the next parish. Now, if the sermon turned on the habits or opinions of the primitive Christians, it is clear that it would fall without meaning on one who did not understand the term. The less knowledge you take for granted amongst uneducated people the better. Be careful, especially, to explain any word on which your discourse

[1] Boswell's Life, vol. i. 357. Oxford Edition.

turns. Suppose you preach on the text, "Unless your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and *Pharisees*, ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven;"—I beg you will not take for granted that your hearers know what *Pharisees* are; for I met with a person once,—and one who read her Bible more than most,—who described the Pharisees as "a little people, not positively wicked, but inclined to mischief." I could not imagine what the good woman meant, till at last the truth flashed upon me. She took them for *fairies*.

One of the greatest faults in style is when, from any cause, it catches the attention of the hearers, and draws it away from the matter of the discourse. "A discourse then excels in perspicuity when the subject engrosses the attention of the hearer, and the diction is so little minded by him, that he can scarcely be said to be conscious that it is through this medium he sees into the speaker's thoughts."[1] If in coming out of church you hear the congregation say, what beautiful language! what a fine discourse! what talent! what eloquence! you have too much reason to fear that your sermon has not had the right effect. The people have been admiring *you*, not minding what you said. You know what is told of the effect produced by the two great orators of antiquity. When Cicero had spoken men said, "What a fine orator!" When Demosthenes had finished, they said, "Let us go and fight Philip." We may be permitted to doubt the correctness of this fact, because many of Cicero's speeches are known to have been most effective. The style of the two orators might be more properly quoted as instances, excellent both in their way, of mild and forcible persuasion. However, the well known saying serves to illustrate the point before us. The object of speaking in

[1] Campbell's Philosophy of Rhetoric.

general is (as Archbishop Whately has laid down) "*to carry your point:*" the preacher's point is to win souls to Christ. "He is the best preacher who maketh you go away and say, not how well he hath preached, but how ill I have lived." What Louis XIV. said to Massillon was the best compliment he could have paid him: "Father, I have heard many great orators in this chapel, and have been highly pleased with them, but for you, whenever I hear you, I go away displeased with myself, for I see my own character." You must, therefore, be very careful that it is not your fault, if you are to your hearers what God told Ezekiel he would be, "a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument, for they hear thy words, but do them not." Such a sermon, "like a concert of music, delights the ear while it lasts, but dies with the sound, and the hearers carry little home, besides a remembrance that they were sweetly entertained."[1] The best sign is, when your hearers depart silently, and are in haste to get home and think about what you have been saying to them; when they are "pricked in their hearts, and inquire anxiously what they shall do to be saved." Cranmer's sermons are said to have been "accompanied by such a heart of conviction, that the people departed from them with minds possessed of a great hatred of vice, and burning with a desire of virtue." It does not much matter what is the style of sermons which have this effect.

It must not, however, be supposed that no care is necessary in the style of a sermon. The public ear has become so accustomed to a certain degree of correctness of style, that any great deviation from it is noticed by the audience, and injures the effect of the sermon, in precisely the same manner as too ambitious and elaborate a style. It draws the

[1] Archbishop Hort.

attention away from the matter; and, of the two, it is worse to hear the congregation say, "What a careless, ill-written sermon!" than, "What a fine one!" A careless inattention to style implies negligence and disrespect to the congregation, and appears as if you were either too indolent to take any pains for them, or thought them so ignorant, that any thing would do;—an impression which, if it were to get abroad, would soon empty your church; for people will not care to come and hear a preacher who cares nothing for them. They forget that at the same time they deprive themselves of the privilege of prayer.

In sermon writing, as well as in all other compositions, attention should be paid to the obviously just rule of Aristotle,[1] that there should be *propriety of language*—a suitableness to the subject matter; and this not only in the adaptation of the language to different passions and emotions, and to the different sentiments designed to be expressed, but in the general tone and character of the whole composition. There is a language for poetry, and a language for prose; and, still further, there is a language for different sorts of prose. Without excluding from the pulpit the more chaste and noble excellences of poetic diction, I think it will be granted that the obscure though sparkling language of lyric poetry, with its bold figures and metaphors, is out of keeping with the soberness of preaching. "The wealth of the anthem peal of ecstasy from a million rich voices, and the solemn bowing down of sparkling multitudes, and the glowing homage of immortal hierarchies"—surely such language is too aspiring even to describe the glories of Christ's kingdom in heaven. It is, however, very possible to fall into the contrary extreme, and employ language too low and familiar. Those especially are to be blamed who use the cant phrases

[1] Rhetoric, iii. 6.

of the journals or the parliament, as "wisdom of our ancestors," "march of intellect," "schoolmaster abroad;" and, even without descending to cant terms, there is a common newspaper phraseology which ill suits the dignity of the pulpit; as for instance, "*In the year sixty or thereabouts*, there occurred in the city of Jerusalem, a serious riot, which proceeded to such a degree of violence that it became necessary to call in the *military* to suppress it." This appears to me equally out of keeping with too poetic diction. Suppose you were to think fit to adopt the jargon of the law, it is evident that a sermon written in such a style would be absurd and improper. Is there not a similar absurdity and impropriety in the use of highly poetic or too popular language? Besides the inherent impropriety of such language, it has the additional fault that every one perceives it to proceed from affectation.

It must not, however, be supposed that the style of sermons should be of one uniform tenor throughout. The topics of preaching are of such infinite variety, and the feelings and faculties which the preacher addresses so diverse, that he must be continually changing his tone and style; for it is obvious that the same would not be suitable to instruction, correction, and persuasion. "Is erit eloquens," (says St. Augustine, quoting from Cicero,) "qui poterit parva submissè, modica temperatè, magna granditer dicere." You will find abundant instances of these different styles in the Epistles.[1]

It should be observed, also, that there is scarcely any language or topic so sublime, nor any so familiar, that it

[1] See Augustini Opera: De Doct. Christ. lib. iv. cap. 22. For the "submissa dictio," he refers to Gal. iv. 21, and iii. 15; for the "temperata," to 1 Tim. v. 1, Rom. xii. 1, and xiii. 12; for the "grandis," to Rom. viii. 28, and Gal. iv. 10. See also Arist. Rhet. lib. iii. ch. 6.

may not be introduced into a sermon, if it be done judiciously. A noble sentiment, or quotation from Scripture, will sometimes burst in suddenly with impressive effect : but a familiar illustration must not be introduced abruptly. I remember a splendid peroration in a charity sermon being spoiled by the preacher saying abruptly, when all eyes were fixed on him, in mute attention, "For my part, whenever a beggar comes to me in the street, I always send him to Mr. ——, the beadle of the Mendicity-office." Generally speaking, therefore, when you desire to introduce some quotation from Scripture, or, on the other hand, some familiar but apposite topic, you should so manage that the tenor of your style should lead to it, and blend with it, that it may not appear abrupt and unsuitable; or you may bring it in by some such observation as the following :—"To use the magnificent language of the inspired teacher," or, "to use an illustration which, though somewhat homely, will explain exactly what I mean."

I have only to add, that in large churches, where you are obliged to preach at the top of your voice, you will find it necessary to adopt a more sustained and grandiloquent style, than when you address a small congregation in your ordinary tone of speaking.

LETTER XIV.

ON STYLE—PERSPICUITY, FORCE, AND ELEGANCE.

THE first thing to be considered with regard to the formation of a proper style for a sermon, is the character of the persons to whom it is to be addressed; and in this consists the main difficulty. For, of all assemblies a Church congregation is the most promiscuous. The greater part of them are commonly illiterate persons—(*illiterate*, observe, not *fools*—"they want learning, not understanding;"[1])—but there are generally a few educated persons amongst them. Your object, therefore, must be to make your style intelligible and impressive to the many, but not distasteful to the few; you are a "debtor equally to the wise and to the unwise." Your style should be *clear* and *forcible*, but not *inelegant*.

I have set down the excellences of style in their order of merit: clearness, or perspicuity, must certainly be acknowledged to be the first requisite. "Whatever be the ultimate intention of the orator, whether to inform or convince, to please, to move, or to persuade, still he must speak so as to be understood, or he speaks to no purpose;"[2] and surely, of all speakers, a preacher of the Gospel has the most need to be careful that his language is clear. It is not possible, per-

[1] Whately. [2] Campbell's Philosophy of Rhetoric.

haps, that *every* word shall be reduced to the level of the lowest understanding, still the main body of the discourse should be in such language as they can readily follow. If your sermon will not bear to be expressed in plain language, you may be sure the matter of it is not very valuable.

I must, however, here suggest one or two cautions. *Plainness of speech is very different from familiarity or vulgarity*, nor does it necessarily imply even homeliness. Such language as the following errs in the excess of homeliness. Mr. Hare is speaking of the Lord's day and of his house: "He has set them apart for his own service; He has fenced them off, as it were, from the waste of the world. Hence there is the same sort of difference between them and all merely worldly and common things, as there is *between a garden and Salisbury plain. No one who knows how to behave himself, would bring a horse into a garden, or walk over the strawberry-beds, or trample down the flowers. But in riding from here to Salisbury every body would feel himself at liberty, while crossing the downs, to gallop over the turf.*" Such passages as these abound in Mr. Hare's otherwise admirable sermons. The great evil of this sort of style is, that the congregation must have supposed that he was joking with them, instead of speaking seriously.

Allied to this, and equally to be avoided, is a tone of *affected condescension*, and avowed adaptation of your style to the ignorance of your hearers. Deeply ignorant as too many of the lower classes still remain "in things belonging to their peace," yet the partial education which they have received has filled them with the pride of knowledge. Give them a tract addressed to persons "*of the meanest capacity*," and they will throw it to their children, if not into the fire. You must adapt your language to their circumstances; and, while you are careful that your style is plain, do not let its plainness be too prominent.

When it is said that the language of a sermon must be perspicuous, it is not meant that it should be such only as *may* be understood if the congregation give their whole mind to it, but such as will be understood with ordinary attention; in short, such as cannot be easily misunderstood.[1] In order to effect this, it should be, not only clear and intelligible, but also *forcible*, under which term I mean to include energy, vivacity, keenness, vigour, and spirit. It should be full of vivid images, and nervous appeals; and, above all, it should have point. The sense should not be diffused over a large surface, but closely packed. It should have weight and momentum; and, at the same time, power to penetrate.

Lastly, your style should be *not inelegant*. Elegance is the last quality in order of merit, but it must not be overlooked. It is the fashion with some writers to speak very slightingly of the beauties of composition as applied to sermons. "These things," says Secker, "raise an useless admiration in weak persons, and produce great contempt in judicious ones." "Give me sound sense," says another writer, "and keep your eloquence for boys;" and Swift applauds a person who made it a rule to pass over a paragraph whenever he saw a note of admiration in it. All this is very just with regard to affected beauties, and gaudy, overflorid, and meretricious embellishment. Still this aversion to ornament may be carried too far—too far, at least, for the taste of modern congregations. They will not be content with "bare sense only, and nothing more." Without some gratification in hearing, they will not come to hear you; and certainly it is a primary object to fill your church, by all proper means. Besides, the mind assents the more readily to what is heard with pleasure. "Qui libenter au-

[1] See Claude's Essay, and Whately's Rhetoric. Part iii. ch. i. sect. 2.

diunt," says Quinctilian, "et magis attendunt, et facilius credunt." And not only is there an impatience of harsh and slovenly style, but without doubt there is, amongst the generality of people, especially in towns, a decided taste for fine and flowery preaching.

It is our business to suit ourselves to circumstances: and it appears to me to be a very good opportunity for the preacher to follow the Apostle's example, who was "all things to all men, if by any means he could save some." You simplify your style to bring it down to the comprehension of a village congregation; why should you not embellish it a little, to suit the taste of your town audience? Surely you may, till you improve it, very innocently indulge the bad taste of your hearers, if by so doing you can make them attend to you, when you speak against their bad habits. If, indeed, you are able to accomplish the same purpose (which the greatest preachers have done) by sound argument, valuable instruction, and home application, by all means do it. Still you may very harmlessly introduce a little more decoration than is consistent with a severe taste, should you find it fill your church and procure attention. However, this is a delicate subject; you must be very careful not to sacrifice truth to ornament, and beware lest, by indulging a taste for what is called fine writing, the native beauty of the Gospel be impaired, as "a picture may be outdazzled by its frame, or a jewel by its setting."

A few examples may be useful to show how far beauties of style and poetical flights are useful and admissible in preaching; and I should wish to make a distinction between such embellishment as heightens the moral effect, and such as is introduced merely to ornament the style. Take the following passage from Bishop Heber.[1] Lamenting over

[1] Heber's Sermons, vol. i. p. 165.

the hardness of some men's hearts, he says, "And these had once their day of grace. These once experienced the blessed visits of God's Spirit. These once heard the voice of their Father most lovingly calling them to repentance. Yea, for them Christ died, and for them, had not themselves rejected the privileges, the *gates of heaven would have rolled back on their starry hinges*, and there would have been joy for their reception among the angels of God most high." Here the poetry, though highly imaginative, is well timed, and certainly heightens the pathos and impressiveness of the passage. Take the following from Mr. Blunt.[1] He is describing the departure of the angels who had announced to the shepherds the nativity of our Saviour. "Turn we now from the announcement of this great mystery by the angels to its effect upon the shepherds. No sooner had the last of that angelic company winged his flight back to those regions of bliss from which he came, and the last notes of that heavenly anthem died upon the gale, than we find the shepherds saying one to another, Let us now go to Bethlehem." In this instance, I am inclined to think more simple language would have been preferable, because he is speaking of a simple fact; no moral sentiment is required to be heightened or dwelt on. The attention of the congregation is needlessly drawn to the imagery, and they are left gazing up into heaven, and listening to the music, "as it dies on the gale," instead of preparing to follow the shepherds to Bethlehem. However, it is certain, that finely expressed sentiments like the above, moderately used, exhilarate the mind and fasten on the memory. Like beautiful landscapes, they attract the traveller's attention, and dwell in his remembrance long after the rest of his journey has been forgotten. Therefore, as the preacher is the sole disposer of his own

[1] Blunt's Lectures on Christ, p. 34.

landscapes, he should study to place them most favourably; not where the traveller is obliged to turn aside, or look back to see them, but where they may burst full upon his view, and enliven without impeding his journey.

The following passage occurs in a sermon preached by Mr. Simeon before the University of Cambridge. "God is exceedingly jealous of the honours of his Gospel. If it be plainly and simply stated, he will work by it; but if it be set forth with all the ornaments of human eloquence, and stated in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, he will not work by it, because he would have our faith to stand not in the wisdom of man, but by the power of God. Hence St. Paul, though evidently qualified to set it forth with all the charms of oratory, purposely laid aside all excellency of speech, or of wisdom, in declaring the testimony of God; and used all plainness of speech, lest by dressing up the enticing words of man's wisdom he should make the cross of Christ of none effect." There is a good deal of scriptural quotation and seeming argument in this passage, but withal a want of logic, a doubtfulness of middle term, a jumbling between "ornaments," and "eloquence," and "enticing words of man's wisdom," and "charms of oratory"—all which are assumed to be the same, whereas they are essentially different. St. Paul used, indeed, great *plainness of speech;* but if we refer to his writings for examples, we shall find that this plainness of speech was consistent with the highest bursts of oratory. Nay, even if we sought examples of what in another writer might be called the artifices of Rhetoric, I know not where we should find them more abundantly. "The Apostle" (says Bishop Stillingfleet,[1]) "does not reject manly and majestic eloquence, for that were to renounce the best use of speech to the convincing and persuading mankind. He

[1] St. Augustin. De Doctrinâ Christanâ, lib. iv. cap. 7.

only ascribes the success of his preaching, not to his own unassisted abilities, or mere human methods of preaching, but to the blessing of God, and the demonstration of miracles giving full power and efficacy to his words. For though the Apostle has no studied turns nor affected cadences, and does not strictly observe (no true genius does) the rhetorician's rules in the nice placing of his words, yet there is great significancy in his words, height in his expression, force in his reasonings, and, when occasion is, a very artificial and engaging way of insinuating into the minds of his hearers. Witness his speech at Athens on the occasion of the inscription on the altar to the unknown God, and before Agrippa and Festus."

With reference to the expression "plainness of speech" there seems to be more than one mistake. First, it betrays no inconsiderable carelessness to speak of it, (when quoted from 2 Cor. iii. 12,) as opposed to enticing words and excellency of speech, for παῤῥησία clearly means in that passage, as it is elsewhere translated, *boldness* and *openness* of speech, not homeliness and the absence of ornament. And, secondly, it is equally erroneous to suppose that plainness of speech—meaning thereby, as we have used the term at the beginning of this letter, perspicuity—is inconsistent with ornament and beauty. We often employ metaphors, and similes, and figures, for the very purpose of rendering our speech more plain and forcible. When our Saviour called the Scribes and Pharisees "a generation of vipers," he spoke plainly enough, though he used a figurative expression. Nor do we suppose that St. Paul used more plainness of speech when he said in simple terms, "We are reconciled to God by the death of his Son,"[1] than where he bursts forth into that noble strain of eloquence, "For this cause I bow my knees

[1] Romans v. 10.

unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his grace, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of God which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God."[1]*

[1] Ephes. iii. 14—19.

* [See Note B, at the end of the volume, "Sermons to be plain."]

LETTER XV.

ON STYLE—AS DEPENDENT ON THE CHOICE OF WORDS.

We will proceed to consider style, first with reference to the *choice* of words, secondly their *number*, thirdly their *arrangement*.

First, with regard to *choice of words*. In every sentence you write, several sets of words and phrases will present themselves, by which nearly the same sense may be conveyed to the hearer. The question is, on what principle to exercise your choice. The general rule should be—since clearness is the first requisite—to choose such words as stand most precisely and exactly for the idea which you wish to give—words which represent the idea, the whole idea, and nothing but the idea, which it is your object to communicate. These are technically called *proper words*.[1]

The first error against this rule is to substitute words which are positively *incorrect and injurious* to the sense. For instance, you will sometimes hear *doctrine* put for *precept*, *fortitude* for *courage*, *mutual* for *common*, *endurance* for *duration*, and the reverse. Do not think it altogether superfluous to be put on your guard against these mistakes; for instances might be quoted even from clever writers, and heard in the mouth even of good preachers.

But the more frequent deviation from precise language,

[1] Whately's Rhetoric, 178. Part iii. ch. ii. sec. 1.

is the use of *general* instead of *particular* terms. Nothing so much impairs the perspicuity and force of language as vagueness. If you fall into the too common habit of preaching, in general terms, on *virtue* and *religion*, *vice* and *wickedness*, without specifying the particular sins which do most easily beset men, and the particular excellencies and comforts of the paths of godliness, your hearers will carry away but a vague and transient impression of your meaning. You will never preach effectively without being very careful to select the most specific and appropriate language; and this point should be attended to in every line. There is almost always a choice between a more or less appropriate, a stronger and a weaker term. Open any book,—for instance, the New Testament at Philippians i. 6.: "Being confident of this very thing," says the Apostle: he might have given nearly the same sense if he had merely said "knowing this;" but how much weaker the expression! "*Abhor* that which is evil, *cleave* to that which is good:" how much stronger than "Cease to do evil, learn to do well."

This, then, is the general rule,—to *use specific and appropriate words*. There are, however, many occasions on which it is expedient to vary from this preciseness of speech.

Force and vivacity are sometimes gained by particularizing where a general expression would have been equally as correct in point of sense. Every one knows how much the vivacity of an anecdote is increased by the names of the parties, and the circumstances of time and place. Aware of this, determined story-tellers do not always scruple to fill up what is wanting from their invention. Do not be surprised if I recommend you to adopt the same principle.[1] You have the highest authority: "Consider the lilies of the field," says our Saviour, "how they grow; they toil not,

[1] See Campbell's Philosophy of Rhetoric, ii. 166; and Whately's Rhetoric, 198.

neither do they spin; yet I say unto you, that *even Solomon* in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."[1] In comparison with this beautiful and vivid passage, how poor is the following paraphrase :—"Consider the flowers how they gradually increase in their size. They do no manner of work, and yet I declare to you that no king whatever in his most splendid habit is dressed like them." The principle on which this sort of language is so forcible, is explained by Aristotle to consist in the thing being "placed before the eyes."[2] We can fancy we *see* the lilies of the field and Solomon in his glory; and, consequently, though in point of sense, the employment of more general terms would have been at least as correct, yet the use of particular terms renders the passage far more lively. A thousand expressions depend for their force on the principle of particularizing: "the cedars of Lebanon," "the wilderness of Cades," are stronger expressions than *any* cedars or *any* wilderness. Thus, Heber, speaking of a period when there were yet some living who had seen Moses, says—"some must have survived who had shared his last benediction, or who had witnessed his firm step and vigorous old age as he climbed the steep of Pisgah." So St. Paul says, "These hands" (instead of *my* hands) "have ministered to my necessities."[3] And if you have a Bible with you in the pulpit, instead of quoting the Scriptures, you may appeal to "this book." Indeed some preachers make a point of reading their text and quotations from a Bible before the congregation, in preference to transcribing them in their manuscript. All these practices, and a thousand others, depend on Aristotle's principle *πρὸ ὀμμάτων ποιεῖν*.

There are, however, many occasions on which the use of particular terms is purposely avoided. Modern refinement

[1] Matt. vi. 28, 29. [2] Arist. Rhet. lib. ii. 1. [3] Acts xx. 34.

will not bear to see many things so graphically painted, as they used to be formerly. The following passage from Bishop Jeremy Taylor's sermon on the death of Lady Carbery, though forcible and pathetic, would not be endured by modern hearers. "We must needs die; we must lay our heads down on the turf, and entertain creeping things in the cells and little chambers of our eyes. The beauty of the face, and the dishonours of the belly, the discerning head and the servile feet, the thinking heart and the working hand, the eyes and the guts together, shall be crushed into the confusion of a heap, and dwell with creatures of an equivocal production, with worms and serpents, the sons and daughters of our bones, in a house of dirt and darkness." Graphical as such language may be in depicting the vanity of earthly beauty, yet, since the refinement of modern taste dislikes it, we must employ in such instances less circumstantial, though perhaps less forcible description.

Indeed, it is one feature of a refined age that language has become perverted from its precise use, and incorrect expressions are often intentionally employed. Thus, in the language of the world, a *selfish* man is called *prudent*, a *penurious* man *careful*, *pride highmindedness*, *lust gallantry* or *gaiety*.

There are many occasions on which it will be right for the preacher to avail himself of this metonymy. When the idea intended to be expressed is harsh or unpleasant, you may often employ a weaker or more general term than that which would be more appropriate. Hence the use of the terms, *uncleanness*, *impurity*, *offensiveness*, instead of more precise words. So, although the preacher must not shrink from declaring the whole counsel of God, nor conceal the terrors of the Lord, yet he may often prefer to soften the language: as when St. Paul, instead of saying the wicked shall perish everlastingly, uses the somewhat mitigated

expression, that they "shall not inherit the kingdom of God."[1]

It will often be necessary, in order to avoid the too frequent recurrence of the same word, to search for *synonyms* and *periphrases*. The judicious use of these will give propriety and beauty to a sentence. Thus, God may be called, according as it best suits the passage, the Almighty, the Creator, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Searcher of hearts, the Disposer of events. Instead of saying, "Shall not God do right?" Abraham said, with great beauty and propriety, "Shall not the *Judge of all the earth* do right?"[2] So our Saviour may be called sometimes with more propriety by his name Jesus, or the Lord Jesus; sometimes by his title Christ, or the Messiah, the Redeemer, the Son of God, the Lamb, the Mediator and Advocate. Your own taste and judgment will suggest the application of this rule. Synonyms and periphrases are sometimes useful for the purpose of depreciation or exaltation (μείωσις or αὔξησις); thus, you may speak of *man* as "created in the image of his Maker," or as being "a very worm, a thing of naught."

For particular rules on these subjects I must refer you to Aristotle, or Campbell, or Blair, or Whately, in whose works the subject is treated with reference to style in general. I shall only set down a few more observations which may be useful to our present purpose.

Since perspicuity is the primary excellence of style in sermon writing, *your metaphors must be such as may be easily understood;* many metaphors which are suitable to poetry would be inadmissible in the pulpit. Look at the 104th Psalm, "O my Lord God, thou art become exceeding glorious, thou art clothed with majesty and honour. Thou deckest thyself with light as it were with a garment, and

[1] 1 Cor. vi. 9. [2] Gen. xviii. 25.

spreadest out the heavens like a curtain. Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters, and maketh the clouds his chariot, and walketh upon the wings of the wind." Now this splendid and bold style is evidently unsuited to preaching, because not only is it out of accordance with the sober and serious tone of a sermon, but would be found to be unintelligible; it might please the ears of the more imaginative part of your audience, but would not edify any of them. At the same time, metaphors should not be trite and common, so as to convey no new or pleasing idea; as if you speak of afflictions as the *storms and waves* of life, and heaven as the *haven* where we would be. Such metaphors are tame and spiritless. The point to be aimed at is, to hit upon such as shall be easily intelligible when spoken, but not too obvious before. The metaphors used by our Saviour, in the New Testament, are the best models for your purpose; they unite the requisite force and simplicity. "I am the good shepherd,[1] and know my sheep, and am known of mine." "I am the true vine,[2] and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." "I am the way, the truth, and the life."[3] "Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction."[4] "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden."[5] The force and beauty of such metaphors as these are intelligible to all. "Sermons," says Hooker, "are keys to the kingdom of heaven, wings to the soul, spurs to the good affections of man, unto the sound and healthy food, physic unto diseased minds."

The principal source of strength and vividness in the

[1] John x. 14. [2] Ib. xv. 1. [3] Ib. xiv. 6.
[4] Matt. vii. 13. [5] Ib. xi. 28.

use of metaphors is when you *represent things in action*, or give a tangible and visible form to what is abstract or inanimate;[1] as when you say *inflamed* with anger, *swollen* with pride, a *stony* heart, *deep-rooted* prejudice, *voice* of nature, *daughter* of Jerusalem.

The same effect is increased by *personification*, and by using the personal pronoun for things inanimate and abstract; thus, "Wisdom crieth without. *She* uttereth her voice in the streets." "*She* is more precious than rubies, and all things that thou canst desire are not to be compared with her. Length of days are in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace:"[2] again, "Charity suffereth long and is kind: charity envieth not, is not easily provoked."[3] So we may personify our church or our country;—a mode of speech which, in the English language, is peculiarly forcible, because unfrequent; the adjectives having no variety of gender, and all substantives, except proper names, being neuter. The following is a splendid instance from Sherlock. "Go to your *natural religion;* lay before *her* Mahomet and his disciples, arrayed in armour and blood, riding in triumph over thousands who fell by his victorious sword. Show her the cities which he set in flames, the countries which he ravaged and destroyed, and the miserable distress of all the inhabitants of the earth. When she has viewed him in these scenes, carry her into his retirement; show her the prophet's chamber, his concubines and wives; and let her hear him allege revelation, and a divine commission, to justify his adultery and lust. When she is tired with this prospect, then show her the blessed Jesus, humble and meek, doing good to all the sons of men. Let

[1] See Quinctilian viii. 6.

[2] Prov. i. 20, iii. 15. [3] 1 Cor. xiii. 4.

her see him in his most retired privacies; let her follow him to the Mount, and hear his devotion and supplications to God. Carry her to his table, and view his poor fare, and hear his heavenly discourse. Let her attend him to the tribunal, and consider the patience with which he endured the scoffs and reproaches of his enemies. Lead her to his cross: let her view him in the agony of death, and hear his last prayer for his persecutors, 'Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.' When natural religion has thus viewed both, ask her, 'Which is the prophet of God?' But her answer we have already had, when she saw part of this scene through the eyes of the centurion who attended at his cross. By him she spoke and said, 'Truly this was the Son of God.'"

This sort of figure, being of a striking and bold character, is peculiarly suitable when applied to *the main subject of your discourse.* Thus Davison frequently personifies his main subject with much propriety. "When prophecy had taken the crown of Israel to place it on the head of David:" Prophecy had pledged its word for the preservation of Judah beyond the fall of Samaria.[1]

A metaphor is often well introduced with a view to following up the idea in a sort of allegory. Blair, in describing the character of the rich, says, "Health and opulence are the two pillars on which they rest. Shake either, and the whole edifice of hope and comfort falls." Here the metaphor is evidently introduced with a view to its improvement. To call health and opulence *two pillars* would not have been striking or forcible, without the circumstances which follow. Thus, Bishop Taylor, speaking of infancy, says, "The candle is so newly lighted, that every little shaking of the taper, and every rude breath of air, puts it out, and it dies."

[1] 203, 268. See also pp. 225, 275, 267.

Beautiful, striking, and impressive, as this sort of language will be found when judiciously used, it is liable to infinite abuse; and when abused, is the most frigid of all modes of speech, and produces an exactly opposite effect from that intended. I know no rule but your own taste, and observation of good authors, to guide you.

There is a species of metaphor, if metaphor it can be called, which is very suitable to the pulpit; consisting in *Scriptural allusion*, or the transferring an idea from its place in Scripture, and using it in an analogous sense; as if we say, God is "no Egyptian task-master," alluding to Exodus v. 10. "The still small voice" of conscience, 1 Kings xix. 12. Thus Bishop Sumner, illustrating the advantages attributable to controversy, says, "The troubling of the waters rendered them wholesome;" and Paley, illustrating the danger of being never able to repent—"O let this danger be known. Let it stand like a flaming sword to turn us aside from the way of vice." In the use of this beautiful figure, you must take care that the passage to which you allude is well known, or the effect of the illusion will be lost. The following passage from Atterbury is objectionable on this account. After rather an eloquent description of the pride and injuriousness of the national enemy, he says, "It was high time, therefore, to appeal once more to the decision of the sword, which, as it was justly drawn by us, so can it scarce safely be sheathed *until the thumbs and great toes of Adoni-bezek be cut off*.[1] I *mean* till the power of the great troubler of our peace be so far pared and reduced, as that we may have no apprehension of it in future."[2] Illustrations which require "I mean" after them, are seldom proper: at least they should be used in another form.

It is rather out of keeping to introduce classical allusions

[1] See Judges i. 6.

[2] Serm. xiv. 304.

in the same manner as those from Scripture; as when Heber says, "Why crush the passions which gnaw, like the Spartan fox, the bosom which confines them?" or again, "The fillet of the allegorical Themis is often as useful to conceal her tears, as to preserve her impartiality." Such illustrations, though beautiful, are scarcely admissible, unless very apposite.

Like, in some respects, to metaphors are *similes*, but not so forcible a mode of expression. Simile is more suited to the argumentative and measured part of a discourse, metaphor to those parts where the tone is warm and impassioned. Similes are used, like metaphors, for the purpose of exalting, degrading, or otherwise modifying, the idea on which you are dwelling. Thus, in the first Psalm, it is said of the righteous, "He shall be *like a tree planted by the water side*, that will bring forth his fruit in due season. His leaf also shall not wither, and look, whatsoever he doeth it shall prosper. As for the ungodly, it is not so with them; but they are *like the chaff* which the wind scattereth from the face of the earth." One of the most beautiful similes perhaps found in any sermon is the following from Jeremy Taylor, in a sermon on Prayer. "So have I seen a lark rising from his bed of grass, and soaring upward, singing as he rises, and hoping to get to heaven, and climb above the clouds; but the poor bird was beaten back by the loud sighing of an eastern wind, and his motion made irregular and inconstant, descending more at every breath of the tempest, than it could recover by the libration and weighing of its wings, till the little creature was forced to sit down, and pant, and stay till the storm was over; and then it made a prosperous flight, and did rise and sing, as if it had learned music and motion of an angel, as he passed sometime through the air about his ministries below. So is the prayer of a good man."

The right choice of *epithets* is highly conducive to ex-

cellence of style. It is impossible to lay down strict rules for the admission or rejection of them. Swift and other writers would have you reject, without regret or mercy, all that do not add to the sense, as being verbose and superfluous; but in the sort of style required for sermons, epithets are admissible in more profusion. They are useful sometimes in enabling you to dwell on an idea; sometimes, even to round and balance a sentence. Quinctilian very much objects to this latter practice, and Cicero continually adopts it. You must judge between them; only take care to avoid the appearance of endeavoring to cover poverty of thought by an exuberance and profuseness of language. A single epithet will sometimes suggest a whole argument, as a "Laodicean temper" "more than Apostolic excellence." Sometimes an accumulation of epithets is forcible, as "that name (the name of Jesus) can bring what no other name which the lips of man have ever uttered can aspire to bring, pardon and acceptance to the most *hardened*, most *rebellious*, most *Godforgetting* spirit amongst us all." Excited feeling and fervid passion love to heap[1] epithets one on another, as if labouring to give utterance to more than words can express, yet does a similar profusion accord also with a calm and dispassionate style. "Now, that perfect state of mind at which we must all aim, and which the Holy Spirit imparts, is a deliberate preference of God's service to every thing else, a determined resolution to give up all for Him, and a love for Him not tumultuous and passionate, but such a love as a child bears towards his parents—*calm*, *full*, *reverent*, *contemplative*, *obedient*."

Amongst words which contribute to energy and beauty of style are those which are expressive of sound. Poets often avail themselves of this excellence, though perhaps coinci-

[1] See Whately's Rhetoric.

dences are sometimes detected which they never intended. However, there is, without doubt, great excellence in such language, as when Milton represents hellgates as "with jarring sound, grating harsh thunder;" and the gates of heaven "on golden hinges turning."[1] Such an application of the power of language is not unattainable in a sermon. Your ear will teach you to employ words of different sound when you wish to express apathy or dullness, or the struggling against sin, or joy, gladness, and thanksgiving.

[1] See Burke on the Sublime.

LETTER XVI.

ON STYLE—AS DEPENDENT ON THE CHOICE OF WORDS.

It is recommended, that generally speaking (when the sense is not different) a preacher should choose those words which are derived from Saxon,[1] in preference to those which are derived from French, Latin, or Greek. He should use "strong vernacular idiomatic Saxon English;" for instance, he should say "*meet together* instead of *assemble, go on* instead of *proceed, make up* instead of *constitute, set free* instead of *liberate.*" Instead of "every year *confirms* our good or evil habits," "every year *adds strength* to them." What is lost in smoothness, by the use of such words, will be gained in clearness: what is lost in sound will be gained in sense. Your style may, perhaps, appear more homely, but it will be far more clear and easy to be understood by the majority of your hearers; nor will men of real taste dislike it. Johnson's style, however well suited to his own teeming mind and ponderous thoughts in essay writing, is acknowledged to be ill-adapted to the simplicity and plainness required in a sermon. "The first fault in style is the frequent use of obscure terms, which by women are called *hard words*, and by the better sort of vulgar *fine language.*"[2] "Cicero is of the same opinion. Utinam ét verba in usu quotidiano posita minus timeremus." How few amongst a country congregation

[1] Whately's Rhetoric, part iii. ch. i. sec. 2. [2] Swift.

gather any definite meaning from the words *sensualist*, *voluptuary*, *latitudinarian*, *skeptic*, *omnipresence*, *omniscience*.

In the pulpit there is a peculiar propriety in the use of the language of our authorized version of Scripture. The original Hebrew very much resembles our Saxon English, in the shortness and strength of the words; and when the translation which we use was made, the English language was in its purest form. Besides, by the use of Scriptural terms we convey to the hearers the same ideas which they have been accustomed to in reading their Bible. Tillotson set a very bad fashion when he altered the received phraseology, and said *reformation* instead of *conversion*, *virtue* instead of *godliness* or *holiness*, *vice* instead of *sin*: and, still worse, Blair, when he speaks of "*humble trust in the favour of heaven*," instead of *faith in God's mercy through Jesus Christ*. I am glad to find that modern preachers have returned to the Scripture terms, and hope you will follow their example. Still, I do not recommend the too constant interlarding of your style with Scriptural phrases, for then your hearers will not know when you quote from the Bible, and when you do not. A quotation from Scripture ought to stand out in contrast with your general style, and, if well introduced, it will show to greater advantage by the contrast,

"Qualis gemma micat fulvum quæ dividit aurum"

Scripture is too frequently quoted in such a manner as rather to impede than assist the sense. You ought to remember that your congregation are not likely to be so well versed in the Bible as yourself: what is familiar to you may be like Greek to them. There are many Scriptural phrases and words which, I apprehend, are not sufficiently intelligible to the majority of the congregation. The very frequency of their use is one cause of their being imperfectly understood, because people take it for granted that they know

what they hear every day. I mean such words as *justification, regeneration, Catholic Church, communion of saints, living in the Spirit, walking in the flesh;* such words and phrases will, I am afraid, convey no clear and definite idea to the majority of your hearers. Those of your congregation who constantly read their Bible, and think about it, will know the meaning; but a large proportion will require to be continually reminded of the simplest truths. A good plan to render them intelligible is frequently to *use a paraphrase in apposition with them;* indeed some of them are of such importance, that a whole sermon might be well devoted to their explanation.

Another caution, which I would beg to suggest to you in the use of Scriptural language, is, that you be careful not to give a New Testament signification to words quoted from the Old Testament. In the text, "Thou wilt not leave my *soul* in *hell*,"[1] the words *soul* and *hell* must not be assumed to have the same signification as in St. Matthew's Gospel: "Fear him that is able to destroy both body and soul in hell."[2] These words in the Old Testament generally signify, the one, *life*, (which, in Levit. xvii. 2, is said to be the *blood*,) and the other, the *grave*. So again the words *salvation* and *redemption*, which occur frequently in the Psalms, mean deliverance from *temporal* dangers; as in the passages, "With the Lord there is plenteous redemption,"[3] "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord."[4] It is true that these and similar passages may often be used analogically or prophetically in the same sense as in the New Testament. What I wish to caution you against is, the using them too prominently, and placing them forward as proofs of any doctrine, to which,

[1] Psalm xvi. 10.
[2] Matt. x. 28.
[3] Psalm cxxx. 7.
[4] Lam. iii. 26.

except the doctrine itself be previously admitted, they can have no relation.

Though I have said thus much by way of caution in the use of Scriptural language, I am far from wishing to discourage it. You had better use too much than too little.

It remains for me to add a few remarks on the sorts of *words which are to be avoided.* It is affected, and in bad taste, to invent new words, or to use those which are uncommon, if old and common ones would do as well. When words are wanted to express new ideas, great authors are allowed the privilege of coining them, and if approved, they afterwards pass current. But great authors should not capriciously exercise their privilege. Why should the able author of *Lectures on Prophecy* employ such uncommon words as "extravagate, deletion, excision, correption?" The use of old words in a new sense, without just cause, is also to be avoided. Horace's rule,

> "Dixeris egregiè, notum si callida verbum
> Reddiderit junctura novum,"

is good in poetry, where vivacity is the object; but does not apply equally to prose, especially sermon-writing, where perspicuity is of primary value.

Some writers are fond of coining adjectives out of proper names, or other substantives. Those which have become familiar from use do not offend the ear, as *Mosaic*, *ante-diluvian.* Mosaic is a good word, because it is taken in a sense not to be expressed otherwise, except by a periphrasis. *The law of Moses* would not correctly express the sense of *the law given by God through Moses.* But I do not see why *the world before the flood* is not in every respect as good as the *ante-diluvian world*, and in many respects better. There are other derivatives sanctioned by great names, as "Adamic," "Paradisiacal," which, I must say, appear mis-

placed in the pulpit. Sometimes, however, as in the case of the word *Mosaic* just mentioned, it may be difficult to find a substitute.

Again, it is lawful, and often highly conducive to energy, to use compound words which could not, perhaps, be found in Johnson's Dictionary, or any standard author, as *God-fearing*, *soul-encouraging*, *heart-consoling;* but there are many strange and uncouth compounds and combinations which modern preachers have thought themselves privileged to adopt, as it seems to me entirely without use or reason, such as "*out-putting*, *high-virtued*, *wrongously*, *battle-tug*, *wrath-cup*, *creature-ship*, *topmost-marvel*, *the for ever and for ever of the Godhead.*" Some of these expressions would only have the effect of causing the congregation to lose two or three minutes in wonder and admiration, before they could again turn their thoughts to the drift of the discourse. The objection to all these sorts of words is, that they savour of pedantry and affectation, which are amongst the worst faults in the pulpit.

LETTER XVII.

ON STYLE—AS DEPENDENT ON THE NUMBER OF WORDS.

Let us now consider what effect on style is produced by the *number* of words;—still keeping in mind that the excellence of style in sermon-writing is, that it be clear, forcible, and not inelegant.

In the number of words employed, *two extremes are to be avoided—too great conciseness, and excessive prolixity.*

Long and short sentences ought to be interspersed, so as to relieve each other. It is very tiresome to hear a string of sentences about the same length, and uttered with the same tone and cadence, like couplets of long and short verses in the mouth of a school-boy. But conciseness and prolixity depend, not so much on actual length or shortness, as on the diffuseness or condensation of matter. In some kinds of writing conciseness could not well be excessive, as in maxims, proverbs, precepts: "Cease to do evil, learn to do well:" "Waste not, want not:" "Honour all men: love the brotherhood: fear God: honour the king." But in the general style of your sermon great conciseness is a considerable fault. For, if the mind of the hearer be not suffered to dwell long enough on an idea, but be hurried on to something else, before an impression is made, the matter of the discourse will be found to have had but little effect. In reading a book, if you do not catch the full sense of a pas-

sage, you may turn back and read it over again, or lay down the book and think; but when you are listening to a sermon, however interested you may be, you cannot ask the preacher to repeat or explain any thing which you have not fully understood, and, like Saint Augustin's hearers, signify to him when you have comprehended it.[1] Clearly, therefore, it is better for the preacher to say too much than too little—to dwell too long than too short a time on a subject. On the other hand, you must avoid that tiresome prolixity of style, when "two grains of wheat are hid in two bushels of meal."

If, after having composed a sermon, you find any part of it prolix and heavy, the first way to remedy the defect is, to throw out superfluous matter, and compress it into a shorter space, or recast and break it up into shorter clauses. The following passage is very prolix, in consequence of putting too much matter into one sentence. "Of the world, implying its possessions and honours, its occupations and pleasures, as well as its cares and disappointments, it is by no means a subject of wonder, that they who are connected with it should entertain different ideas, that such differences should occasionally run into extremes, but that the prevailing opinion should be in its favour, and lead the majority of men to pursue its seeming advantages with unwise and unreasonable ardour." Perhaps it might be better arranged thus: "When we look at the world with its possessions and honours, its occupations and pleasures, its cares and disappointments, it is by no means a subject of wonder that they who are connected with it should entertain very different ideas respecting it. Nor can we be surprised that the prevailing opinion should be in its favour, and lead the majority of men to pursue its seeming advantages with unwise and unreasonable ardour."

[1] Augustini Opera. De Doct. Christ. Lib. iv. cap. 10.

There are two rules which I think you will find useful in correcting these faults in the style of a sermon. Both will appear at first sight more likely to increase than remedy prolixity, but on trial will be found the reverse. The first is to employ *repetition.*[1] It is necessary, as we observed, to dwell for a certain time on the same idea, in order that it may fix itself on the mind of your hearers. But this must not be done by stuffing out your sentences with needless and unnecessary epithets, and cumbrous and unwieldly periphrases. What I recommend, then, is this: *employ concise language, but repeat the same idea;* repeat it in several forms, dwell on it, turn it over, bring it out again and again, even though with little variation of sense. Johnson, speaking of legal eloquence, says, "You must not argue in Committees as if you were arguing in the schools; close reasoning will not fix their attention; you must say the same thing over and over again in different words. If you say it but once, they miss it in a moment of inattention." He might have added, if they do not miss it, they *forget* it. But the repetition should not be apparent. If you have first enunciated a proposition in plain terms, repeat it in metaphors, or synonyms, or double negatives; in short in any way, so that you dwell on the idea just long enough to be sure it is taken in. An instance of this method will best show what I mean. The following is found in Paley's sermon on the text, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" "The case (he says) supposes a sense and thorough consciousness of the rule of duty, of the nature of sin, of the struggle, of the defeat. It is a prisoner sensible of his chains. It is a soul tied and bound by the fetters of its sin, and knowing itself to be so. It is by no means the case of the ignorant sinner. It is not

[1] Whately's Rhet., part iii. ch. i. sec. 2.

the case of an erring mistaken conscience; it is not the case of a seared and hardened conscience." In the delivery of a sentence like this, you may address each clause to separate portions of your congregation, and the best use of it would be, if you could so interpret the expression of your hearers' countenances, as to repeat the idea in different forms, until they had taken it in, and no longer;—if you could just hammer at the nail till you had driven it home. Here is one advantage of extemporaneous preaching.

The second rule which I propose for avoiding prolixity without falling into too great conciseness is the following:[1] If you find you have written a sentence which is somewhat heavy, and cannot readily be either broken up or omitted, you may correct it *by adding to the end of it something pithy or concise;* a brief summary, for instance, of what has gone before; a pointed illustration, a short and appropriate text, a smart antithesis, or striking sentiment. It may seem rather paradoxical to recommend you to make a sentence longer, in order to remedy prolixity; but this undoubtedly is the effect of such addition as I have described. It relieves the ear from the dulness of that which went before, and leaves off with a degree of vivacity which makes you forget the former heaviness. A sentence so constructed may be compared to a heavy lance tipped with steel: it has weight at its point.

A similar effect is produced by beginning the next paragraph with a smart sentence.

But I must find you some instances of these methods. The following from Paley[1] will exemplify both, "That righteousness exalteth a nation, is one of those moral maxims which no man chooses to contradict. Every hearer assents to it; but it is an assent without meaning. There is

[1] Whately's Rhet. part. iii. ch. ii. sec. 8. [2] Sermon xvi.

no value, or importance, or application perceived in the words. But when such things happen as have happened; when we have seen, and that at our doors, a mighty empire falling from the summit of what the world calls grandeur, to the very abyss and bottom, not of external weakness, but of internal misery and distress; and that for want of virtue, and of religion in the inhabitants, on one side probably as well as on the other, we begin to discover that there is not only truth, but momentous instruction in the text, when it teaches us that righteousness exalteth a nation. It is virtue, and virtue alone, which can make either nations happy, or governments secure."

"France wanted nothing but virtue, and by that want she fell."

In some cases, intentional verbosity, or more properly speaking, *amplification*, is a beauty. When, for instance, multitude, and amplitude, and vastness, and indefatigableness, are the ideas which you wish to express, your language should be correspondently extended. Thus, in Exodus i. 7, "And the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty, and the land was full of them:" all this is not too much to express the prodigious increase of the children of Israel from seventy souls to six hundred thousand men, besides women and children.

Amplification is suited to express great interest and excitement. When you are narrating an interesting story, you naturally dwell on all the minutest details; and when any passion is excited, the mind loves to express itself in redundant copiousness. Thus St. Paul:—"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword? As it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all

these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."[1] In this passage you will observe the reiteration of the conjunction, as well as the lengthened enumeration of particulars.

[1] Rom. viii. 35—38. See also Ezek. xviii., and Daniel iii.

LETTER XVIII.

ON STYLE—AS DEPENDENT ON THE ARRANGEMENT OF WORDS.

To give rules for the construction of a sentence is the office of grammar rather than of rhetoric. But good grammatical sentences may be deficient in rhetorical requirements. They may be clumsy and inelegant, or deficient in force or clearness.

It is not necessary for the language of a sermon to be as carefully and precisely arranged as that of an essay, or any other composition which is not intended for recitation, because in the former, the tone of voice and manner of delivery will sufficiently mark the sense to correct any deficiency in arrangement. Thus in the sentence—"The Romans understood liberty at least as well as we,"—the emphasis would show that the words "at least" are meant to qualify the sense of what follows them, and not what goes before. Yet even in sermon-writing it is desirable to acquire a habit of expressing yourself with precision. It would have been just as easy, and much more correct, to have said—"The Romans understood liberty as well at least as we." I must refer you to elementary works[1] for rules respecting the arrangement of a sentence, and shall only make a few remarks which appear useful for our present purpose.

[1] See Irving's Elements of English Composition.

The first essential point in a sentence is *unity*. This, indeed, is an excellence which ought to run throughout your whole composition. There ought to be an unity of subject in your sermon. Each division ought to embrace one entire branch of the subject; each paragraph one entire argument or topic; and each sentence one idea;—at least one sentence should not contain ideas widely different from each other; the scene and person should not be changed, nor should unconnected actions be described. The following sentence is liable to objection:—"Archbishop Tillotson," says an author of the History of England, "died in this year. He was much beloved both by King William and Queen Mary, who nominated Dr. Tennison, Bishop of Lincoln, to succeed him."[1] What has the nomination of Dr. Tennison to the vacant office to do with the regard of the King and Queen for Archbishop Tillotson? The principal source of want of unity in a sentence is the unskilful employment of the relative, in such a manner that the scene is constantly shifted, and the person changed. Careless writers will in this manner link together three or four distinct sentences.

Another cause of the same error is the use of awkward and improper *parentheses*. You will inevitably spoil the style of your sermon by introducing fresh matter, which occurs to you *subsequently to composition*, or qualifying your former statements, by the use of parenthesis. It is much better to reconstruct the sentence altogether. When, however, they occur at the first composition it is different, for then they tend to produce strength and *naturalness*, inasmuch as they represent the first impressions of the mind. This form of sentence may be much more frequently employed in spoken than in written language, because the varied intonation of the voice is sufficient to mark the change.

[1] This is quoted from Blair's Lectures.

The following are instances—"If any man, says our Saviour, (and he makes no limitation to the learned and ingenious, and no exclusion of the uneducated and simple,) if any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God."[1] And again, in speaking of the miracles of the Gospel—"They might, (I deny the fact, while I admit the possibility,) they *might* possibly be the work of some spiritual and invisible being subordinate to God." In these instances the parenthesis appears to arise, as doubtless was the case, from vivacity of thought, and consequently, instead of clogging or impeding the sense, it gives additional spirit and energy.

We will now consider briefly the effect of different ways of arranging words in a sentence.

Some writers have lamented the disuse of the order of arrangement practised by the Greeks and Romans, termed the *inverted* or *transpositive* order; others greatly prefer the modern fashion, which they are pleased to call the *natura* order. Why one mode should be thought more *natural* than another is not very clear, except on the principle that those things are natural to which we are accustomed, and the reverse. A French writer declared that the English dinners were served up without any regard to order, because they were not in the order to which he was used. The more just view of the case seems, however, to be, that the *natural order* is to put the principal idea in that situation where it shall be most prominent, and that is generally at the beginning In English, most commonly, *the subject* is placed first. But when immediate attention is required, and sudden change of action signified, then it is more natural to place the verb first, or the object. "There appeared unto them Moses and Elias"[2] Here the *apparition* is the principal circumstance: so when Euryalus says,

[1] John vii. 17. [2] Matt. xvii. 3.

"Me, me, (adsum qui feci,) in me convertite ferrum,"[1]

in the hurry to speak, he seems to pronounce the word which he is most anxious to utter, before he has had time to think what is to follow It should be remembered, that the principal idea in a sentence is the *new* idea, and at the same time that the arrangement of a sentence must depend very much on the connection with what goes before and what follows. The variety of the termination of genders and cases in the ancient languages affords a greater facility for the lucid arrangement of a sentence, but on the other hand the infrequency of transposition in English renders it, when it does occur, more striking. There is a strangeness, and consequent vivacity, in the sentences—"Great is Diana of the Ephesians:"[2] "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world:"[3] "Silver and gold have I none."[4] Poets continually avail themselves of this variety of order, for the sake of vivacity as well as convenience, and preachers may occasionally do the same; but not frequently, because it would appear affected. The variety of termination in the cases of the pronouns affords the opportunity of transposition; as in the sentence,—"Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and Saviour."[5] But this order is not so commonly used now, as at the time when our authorized version of the Bible was made. The rule is to give prominence to those words which are most important. "Behold *now* is the accepted time; behold *now* is the day of salvation."[6] "*In every nation* he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with him."[7]

There are various forms into which you may throw the same materials. *Interrogation* is very suitable to preaching,

[1] Virg. Æneid. ix. 427. [2] Acts xix. 28. [3] Ib. xv. 18.
[4] Acts iii. 6. [5] Ib. v. 31. [6] 2 Cor. vi. 2.
[7] Acts x. 35.

both for the sake of liveliness of style, (as, instead of saying, "I dwell on this topic because"—you might ask, "Why do I dwell on this topic?") and also with a view to direct the attention of your hearers to any thing you wish particularly to impress. Another use of interrogation is to introduce doubts or objections which you wish to answer; as, "What shall we say then? shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?"[1] The same may be done by supposing another person to speak: "But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?"[2] This form of speech is very useful, but should not be employed too frequently, or it will lose its effect.

To those who preach in a confident manner, and have full command of the tones of their voice, *Apostrophe*, sparingly used, is a striking form of speech. "It is finished, Holy Victim, thy sufferings are finished." "False professor, thou hast this day been weighed in the balance, and art found wanting." "Adversity, how blunt are the arrows of thy quiver in comparison with those of guilt!"[3]

There is a form of speech very much allied to apostrophe, and, I think, more suitable to the pulpit, and that is, the singling out, as it were, and addressing some individual, as, "Compute now, O wise man as thou art, what thou hast gained by thy selfish and intricate wisdom; and canst thou say that thy mind is satisfied by the past tenor of thy conduct?"[3] The following passage is from Cooper. "Come, thou drunkard, who makest it a practice, whenever a convenient opportunity may offer, to indulge thy sensual appetite, and to sink the man into the beast, stand forth, and, in the midst of this congregation, say, whether thou findest the ways of drunkenness to be the ways of pleasantness and peace?"

[1] Rom. vi. 1. [2] 1 Cor. xv. 35. [3] Blair's Sermons.

Many preachers are fond of throwing their sentences into the form of *reflections* or *exclamations* instead of propositions. "What so great as man! How exalted the dignity of his nature above inferior animals! What a gift of reason! What a distinction of speech! What a desire of happiness . . . and yet what so little as man! What contradictions is this strange creature daily and hourly exhibiting!"[1] A more sober preacher would have said, "Man is a strange compound of base and noble qualities." The exclamatory style suits the manner of some preachers, and when moderately used has a good effect.

Well adapted to the quiet style of English preaching, and useful to give it animation, is the *reiteration* of a word or form of expression. "What was it that made Saul of Tarsus so noble an example to men and angels? it was *zeal; zeal* for the Saviour who died for him, and for the Saviour who redeemed him." "Often is Christ *grieved* for his children, *grieved* at their coldness in his service, *grieved* at their wavering faith, *grieved* at their besetting infirmities."[2] "Sitting still is no proof of election, but grappling with evil *is a proof*, and wrenching ourselves from hurtful associates *is a proof*, and studying God's word *is a proof*, and praying for assistance *is a proof*."[3] This figure of speech is very common with some preachers; so much so as to become mannerism. It is chiefly suitable to those parts of a sermon which demand earnestness and warmth. It seems as if the preacher was so full of ideas, and so eager to give them utterance, as to have no time to seek for different forms of speech. But it is not suitable to ordinary argument, as it takes away from the calmness and gravity of style, and gives too hurried a tone.

Climax is another striking mode of arranging ideas. "It is something to see our companions go down to the

[1] Bishop Wilson's Lectures. [2] Bishop Jebb. [3] Mr. Melvill.

grave. It is more when they are of our own age, our own apparent strength, habit, constitution of body; more still, when they appear to have hastened their end by some practice to which we are addicted. But many who will not take warning from others, begin for the first time to be startled by what they feel in themselves,—symptoms of danger and decline in their own bodies."[1] In every sentence where several facts or ideas are enumerated, care should be taken to reserve the strongest till the last.

Antithesis (but this also used sparingly) is useful in the style of sermons, and conducive to clearness, force, and elegance. The contrast of one thing with another sets them both off in a stronger light; thus: "Let the fear of God's justice keep us from presumption, and the hope of his mercy from despair." "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."[2] The best use of antithesis is when there is a contrast in the subject, and the antithesis springs naturally from it, as in the following passage: "Hence all the idle debates which have been agitated, sometimes by the visionary philosopher, sometimes by the melancholy recluse, on the comparative excellence of speculative and practical life, and of the social and solitary. Yet common sense will surely tell us that speculation, unless coupled with practice, may confer intellectual superiority, but cannot imply moral merit; and we may learn from the same direction, that if *temptations to vice be in the social state of many, the opportunities for virtue in a solitary one are few.*" Sometimes an artificial antithesis sets forth a sentiment strongly and strikingly; as in the following of Seneca: "Non quia difficilia sunt non audemus, sed, quia non audemus, difficilia sunt." Such neat and compact sentences are occasionally well introduced in a sermon;

[1] Paley's Sermons. [2] Rom. vi. 23.

especially when you sum up an argument, and wish to give the pith of it in a portable shape. But it is not well in general to aim at an antithetical form of speech, as its artificial appearance is unfavourable to persuasion; and writers are sometimes led by it into stronger statements than can be warranted.

LETTER XIX.

ON STYLE—THE CONNECTIVES.

It is necessary that we make a few remarks on the use of connectives.

"The connectives," says Dr. Campbell, "are all those terms and phrases which are not themselves the signs of things, of operations, or of attributes, but by which, nevertheless, the words in the same clause, the clauses in the same members, the members in the same sentence, and even the sentences in the same discourse, are linked together, and the relations between them are *suggested*." I should rather say *marked*, for in truth the connectives often govern the sense, and give the entire force and character to the clause or sentence. This definition of connectives, with the slight alteration which I have suggested, may do very well; but he goes on to speak of them in a manner (as it appears to me) highly derogatory to their just claims. Calling them "the most ignoble parts of speech," "the most unfriendly to vivacity," "in their nature the least considerable parts, as their value is merely secondary," and "as being but the taches which serve to unite the constituent parts in a sentence or paragraph." We might as well call the hinges and latch the most unimportant parts of a door, or the knees and ankles the most ignoble parts of the leg.

Mr. Irving speaks very differently of these parts of speech. "The connective parts of a sentence," he says, "are the most important of all, and require the greatest care and attention; for it is by these chiefly that the train of thought, the course of reasoning, and the whole progress of the mind, in continued discourse of all kinds, is laid open; and on the right use of them depends perspicuity, the greatest beauty of style." "A close reasoner," says Coleridge, "and a good writer in general may be known by the pertinent use of connectives . . . . In your modern books for the most part the sentences in a page have the same connexion with each other as marbles in a bag; they touch without adhering."

When we consider that in spite of its inflections and compounds, the Greek language has more connectives than our own, that the acute and subtle genius of that refined people found a separate word for every connexion, modification, and transition of thought, and that their language is, beyond dispute, the most perfect that has ever existed, we must, I think, confess that the connectives do not deserve to be rashly condemned as inelegant.

Connectives are especially useful in sermon-writing. Nothing contributes more to render a sermon impressive, interesting, and easy to be followed, understood and remembered, than the obvious and well marked connexion of its parts; and nothing is more apt to make the hearers drop their attention in despair, than any difficulty or painfulness in pursuing the connexion.

It was laid down in a former letter that the style of a sermon should not only be such as *might* be understood with fixed attention, but such as could not be misunderstood with ordinary attention; as a corollary to which, I would add, that not only should the connexion of the sentences and

parts of the discourse be such as *may* be perceived, but such as *cannot but be perceived.* It is true that skilful arrangement goes a good way towards making a sermon intelligible; yet of itself it is insufficient,—at least in popular addresses before a mixed audience,—without the liberal aid of connectives. The preacher should remember that the bearings of the subject which are familiar to his own mind are not, perhaps, thought of by the hearers. I have heard a preacher deliver a good and well arranged sermon, but for want of proper connectives—the matter being a string of propositions, and the manner and tone not sufficiently forcible to make up the defect—it required a most painful degree of attention to follow him. The consequence of this unpleasant sensation would be, in most cases, that nine-tenths of the congregation would cease to listen; or, if they did listen, would catch only detached sentences. After such a discourse the hearers depart with the feeling of the Lacedæmonian senator, who, after hearing the speech of the Athenian ambassador, declared that he had forgotten the first part, and did not understand the last.

I shall not follow Dr. Campbell in the plans which he proposes for the suppression of the connectives, because I do not perceive any advantage likely to be gained by endeavoring after this elliptical form of expression. In sermon writing it is certainly not worth while to run any risk of being mistaken, or even imperfectly understood, for the sake of a little more point and conciseness. Indeed, I would adopt altogether a different course, especially with regard to the connectives which join together paragraphs, and form the transition from one argument to another. My notion is as follows.

Connectives are stated by the author of "Diversions of Purley," to be by origin verbs or nouns, or the abbreviations

of sentences. For the sake of brevity in conversation, or in other sorts of language where conciseness is thought desirable, these connectives have come to be packed in the smallest possible compass, or sometimes even omitted entirely. I deny, however, the invariable tendency in conversation to abbreviate or omit connectives. Where the connexion is important, the speaker naturally dwells some time on it. You will hear a man say, "*Now if* so and so is true, *why then* so and so follows." In a sermon it is an important rule, that each principal idea must be for some time dwelt on, in order to make the due impression. If, then, *the connexion itself* be the idea which it is important to mark, you cannot safely curtail or omit the connectives. Dr. Campbell says, that "the cohesion of the parts in a cabinet or any other piece of furniture seems always more complete, the less the pegs and taches so necessary to connect it are exposed to view." True; but, in a sermon, the points of cohesion are often the very parts you wish to make most visible. It is not enough to show that the different parts rest upon each other, but it is also desirable to set forth *how* they rest, in order that your hearers may not only believe, but be able to give a reason for the faith which is in them. Therefore—to come at last to my own suggestion on the subject—if, as Dr. Campbell says, it be offensive to hear the quick returns of the *alsos*, and the *likewises*, and the *moreovers*, and the *howevers*, and *notwithstandings;* instead of omitting them,—which would often impair the perspicuity of the passage, and prevent the connexion being readily discerned,—I *would paraphrase or resolve them into sentences.* Instead of *also*, *likewise*, *moreover*, I would say something of this sort—"There is yet another argument for your consideration;" "so much for this point, let us go on to the next." Instead of *however*, *notwithstanding*, *nevertheless*, I would say—"Let me not be misunderstood;" "take another view

of the subject;" "though there is some weight in what has just been urged, there is this to be said in reply;" "in this part of our argument we must not forget;" "the last argument I would suggest is this." I do not mention these as being, all of them, models for your imitation; but simply as instances of the mode in which perspicuity may be attained, without, as it appears to me, any essential sacrifice of elegance. This, of course, is not the style suited to essay writing, but merely to sermons; for it was before agreed that, if it were needful, elegance must be sacrificed to perspicuity.

One point I may further mention, which is, that the connexion and transition from one part of your subject to another should be in plain and simple language, and not, as a certain forensic orator once said, "We are now advancing from the starlight of circumstance to the daylight of discovery. The sun of certainty is melting the darkness, and—we are arrived at facts admitted by both parties." But you will often find that the transition to fresh matter may be sufficiently marked by varying the tone of voice, and using proper pauses.

The foregoing observations relate principally to the connectives between sentences and paragraphs: a few words should be added on those which join together words. You will find the omission or multiplication of them *(Asyndeton and Polysyndeton)* of great use to vary your style. When the subject requires a calm, measured, deliberative style, then the omission of conjunctions is proper; as in the following passage: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."[1] But when a fulness and copiousness of language is required to express passion and energy, your object is

[1] Gal. v. 22, 23.

gained by the reiteration of the copula, as when St. Paul says, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus my Lord."[1]

[1] Rom. viii. 38, 39. See also 1 Cor. vi. 11.

PART III.

ON THE METHOD OF COMPOSING.

LETTER XX.

ON THE CHOICE OF A SUBJECT.

The most humorous of satirists has said, that

> "All the rhetorician's rules
> Teach nothing, but to name his tools."

Let us endeavour to avoid this imputation. Having in the foregoing letters named all the principal tools of rhetoric, let us now proceed to learn the use of them.

My present letter shall be devoted to giving you some hints on the *choice of a subject.*

You will do well to determine this point early in the week; and to get your sermon in hand, or at least in your head, as soon as possible. Probably after some practice you may be able to write a very fair sermon in two days, or less; but if you reserve only the last two days of the week, how can you be sure of sufficient time to finish it? Your time may be broken in upon by fifty different things; you may be

tormented by a headache, or interrupted by visitors; or some unexpected duty in your parish may arise; or you may not feel yourself in a humour or fit frame of mind for composing; for even the best authors are not equally prompt and alert at all times—Homer himself was liable to occasional drowsiness—and what is written "invitâ Minervâ" will have but little spirit or effect. Therefore, if you defer all thoughts about your sermon till Friday or Saturday, the chances are that you will produce a dull or slovenly composition, or be obliged to put off your congregation with an old one.[1]

[1] ["That which is recorded of Dr. Donne by his biographer, might no doubt be recorded of many other diligent and faithful clergymen. 'The latter part of his life may be said to be a continued study: for, as he usually preached once a week, if not oftener, so after his sermon he never gave his eyes rest till he had chosen out a new text, and that night cast his sermon into a form, and his text into divisions; and the next day betook himself to consult the Fathers, and so commit his meditations to his memory, which was excellent.' And much to the same effect is related of Dr. Hammond, that 'his method was, which likewise he recommended to his friends, after every sermon to resolve upon the ensuing subject;' for which he collected materials in the course of his study through the week. And the consequence was, that 'his preaching was not, at the ordinary rate of the times, an unpremeditated, undigested effusion of shallow and crude conceptions; but a rational and just discourse, that was to teach the priest, as well as the lay-hearer.'

"Such appears to be the conduct which becomes a zealous and diligent clergyman. On the contrary, to occupy the greater part of the week in unprofessional employments, and to thrust off the provision and preparation requisite for this important duty on the Lord's day till only the day or the two or three days immediately preceding, seems to betray a mind not properly alive to its professional obligations; not duly earnest in the cause of God and a desire to 'set forth his glory;' not sufficiently anxious to promote the instruction, and to 'set forward the salvation' of the people; who, in all probability, when the matter comes to the trial, will in fact be little instructed

"The subject of a sermon," says Archbishop Hort, "ought to be some point of doctrine that is necessary for a Christian to know, or some duty that it is necessary for him to practise, in order to salvation." Now these are not precisely the points to which a young clergyman is most likely to have given his latest attention. The discourses which he has heard at the University have turned probably on some topic of learned controversy, or some important point of criticism. Or his head is full of the evidences of Christianity, or of the proofs and explanation of the Articles—subjects which he has been most properly engaged in mastering for his ordination. In short, the bias of his mind is more towards the argumentative and controversial, than the practical points of religion. It now becomes your business to change the tone of your thoughts, from what is speculative and theoretic to what is more practical and profitable. For your first ten or twelve sermons, I should say, that decidedly the best course, both for yourself and your flock, would be, to arrange your thoughts with the greatest care, and with diligent reference to Scripture, on some of those great subjects of religion on which every clergyman, in his intercourse with his parishioners, has occasion daily to speak. Such, I mean, as life, death, judgment, repentance, the fall, the atonement, the sacraments, sanctification, justification, faith, and charity. Every clergyman ought, for the sake of those whom he has to instruct, as well as for his own, to

and edified by such ill-considered and ill-prepared semblances of teaching.

"He who would offer to the Lord an acceptable sacrifice, must not treat his 'table as contemptible,' by offering 'the blind, the lame, and the sick;' and 'the priest's lips' must acquire and 'keep knowledge,' if he would have the people 'seek the law' profitably and effectually 'at his mouth.'"]—*Bishop Mant's Clergyman's Obligations, p.* 255–7.

have these great subjects, not only in their doctrinal, but still more in their practical bearings, clearly and decidedly impressed on his mind; so that he may never be at a loss, whether in the sick room or the pulpit, the cottage or the school, to speak on them to his own satisfaction, and his hearers' profit. Here, then, are subjects prepared for you for the first two or three months.

We will now suppose you to have finished this course of primary subjects, and to have arrived at the routine duty of an established parochial pastor. It is a very good plan to have a number of sketches of sermons by you. Whenever, in the course of reading or meditation, a profitable subject presents itself, you should note it down in a common-place book, to which you may refer when at a loss for other topics. But I suppose you by this time to have become acquainted with the circumstances and wants of your flock; and it is to these that you must always look when selecting the subject of your discourse. Never choose at random, nor with reference to your own fancy or convenience; but think always on what will be most edifying to those committed to your charge. You should make yourself acquainted with their habits of thought, and consider well the time, place, and circumstances in which those whom you address are placed. The more pointed and particular your sermon is, provided it be not personal, the better. "It is an unpardonable piece of negligence for a preacher to omit noticing the particular subjects applicable to the great festivals of the church. The congregation come prepared for the occasion, and are justly disappointed if they hear a discourse entirely unconnected with it."[1] Besides, the festivals afford an opportunity of fixing attention on the most important truths, which you should be careful to improve.

[1] Paley.

So necessary did St. Chrysostom consider it that his hearers' minds should be pre-occupied, that it was his custom to give out beforehand what was to be the subject of his next discourse, and desire his congregation to read and meditate upon it, so that they might be better able to judge of what he said. When a congregation is serious and uniformly attentive, something similar to this may be done advantageously by preaching courses of sermons, instead of unconnected discourses: only do not let your courses be too long or spun out, as the most attentive hearers will sometimes tire.

There are many other ways of adapting your subject to the thoughts which occupy your hearers. Thus the changes of the seasons present good opportunities, especially in country churches, to turn the current of ideas into a profitable channel. The bursting into life of the vegetable world, and the joyousness of nature in spring time, prepares the mind to acknowledge the goodness of God in creation and redemption. The fall of the leaf produces on most minds a feeling of sadness, which may be easily directed to serious thoughts on the shortness and vanity of all worldly objects, or the fatal effects of sin. Seed time and harvest, summer and winter, the end of the old year, and the beginning of the new—all these are subjects pregnant with appropriate instruction. I do not speak so much of the topics of Christian interest which may be drawn either directly or by analogy from these occasions, as of the tone of feeling which is prevalent at particular times. Thus, for instance, the return of Christmas not only reminds us of the nativity of our Lord, and the great doctrines connected with that event, but finds the minds of men disposed to charity and good will. Should no appropriate subject of this sort occur, "it is no contemptible advantage to take your subject from the Scriptures

which have been read during the service."[1] This was Herbert's constant practice.[2] Some instructive parable, some interesting narrative, the main argument of a chapter, the subject of a psalm, some prominent difficulty which cannot but be remarked,—as the intended sacrifice of Isaac, the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, the destruction of the Canaanites by Joshua, the Lord's commendation of the unjust steward,—any of these would be likely to interest your congregation. Sometimes the comparing together of different portions of Scripture which occur in the service, will produce the same effect; as in the fifth Sunday in Lent, compare Exodus iii., the first lesson, with John viii., the Gospel for the day, both of which chapters refer to the great name "Jehovah," or "I am." Besides the advantage gained, from the circumstance that the congregation will have first heard the part of Scripture from which your text is taken, read, (and, by your mode of reading, you ought to have made it interesting to them,) it has also a good moral effect, showing that you take pains in their instruction, and write your sermons for your congregation. There is, however, one objection to choosing your subject from the lessons in the Testament, which is, that you lose the opportunity of explaining other portions of Scripture, which are seldom read by some, and entirely unknown by those of your hearers who cannot read. On this account, when you choose a subject from the Old Testament, perhaps it is preferable to select one which is not found among the lessons of the Church service. These lessons, being familiar to all who frequent the Church, furnish an excellent store of illustrations and examples.

It will also be proper to improve any unlooked for and

[1] Paley. [2] See Walton's Lives.

extraordinary occurrence which may occupy general attention. Great caution must, of course, be used in preaching on political subjects; and all irritating topics of that nature should be avoided; but there are many topics of national interest,—as peace and war, public prosperity and adversity, and others of a similar nature,—which belong legitimately to the pulpit, and generally, if well handled, excite a deep interest. Occurrences of local notoriety kindle a still livelier feeling than these. Suppose a contested election—this you will say is forbidden ground. In one sense it is: but you may still avail yourself of the excitement of feeling, by contrasting the peaceful enjoyments of religion with the turbulence of worldly passion—you may claim one day in the seven for the service of your Maker—and, by the exorcising wand of the Gospel, you may calm the tempest which conflicting passions have raised. A sudden check or contrast of emotion is often as effective as to fan the flame which is already kindled. You may also allude to any striking calamity or warning, which has occurred within the knowledge of your hearers; like the fall of the tower of Siloam, and the mingling of the Galileans' blood with their sacrifice.[1] When, by any extraneous cause, the hearts of men are touched, or their fears awakened, or their feelings are excited, they are more easily affected with those religious emotions, which are connected with the cause of their excitement.

It is not without good reason that the style of funeral sermons, which prevailed half a century ago, is exploded. "It can answer no good end to slur over the faults of the departed, or to exalt the good qualities which they possess, by laboured encomiums and fulsome panegyrics." Indeed, infinite harm may be done by incautious funeral sermons.

[1] Luke xiii.

There is but one model which we can safely imitate—that of our Lord Jesus Christ; all others are imperfect, fallible, and, therefore, dangerous. Nevertheless, without unduly praising, or giving needless offence by alluding to faults, it is possible to make some one point in the character of the departed available for the introduction of useful and impressive matter. Thus, when a principal person in your parish, well known for sound wisdom and well-directed activity, is cut off in the midst of his days, you may impress on the minds of your hearers the fugitiveness of worldly wealth, and the instability of the highest human attainments, for that "wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others."[1] When a respected and amiable man, full of years, sinks maturely into the grave, you may dwell on the sacred text, that "the hoary head is a crown of glory, *if* it be found in the way of righteousness."[2] The death of a young person will seldom excite so general a feeling of interest, as to furnish a fit topic for notice in the pulpit. But, if an affecting case occur, you will do well not to neglect so good an opportunity of enforcing the uncertain tenure of life, the blessedness of an early devotion of the heart to God, and the real gain which death is to the righteous.

In all these subjects, the main point should be, to direct by their means the minds of your hearers more forcibly, not to the character of the deceased, but to some point of Christian faith or duty; and, especially to turn their thoughts from things temporal to things eternal. It is of no use to fill their eyes with tears, and make the church resound with sobbing, by pathetic descriptions of human sorrows, by accounts of weeping relations, and by lamentation that so excellent and amiable a person should be taken away.

[1] Psalm xlix. 10. [2] Prov. xvi. 31.

Your aim should be not to excite, but to hallow their feelings, and to send away your hearers rather rejoicing than weeping—serious, but not sad—satisfied with the decrees of God, rather than in a querulous and desponding frame of mind. In short, their human feelings should be absorbed in those of a Christian.

I have supposed, in the foregoing instances, that the occasion of your preaching has been the death of some person who was beloved and respected: but contrary cases too frequently occur, which require great tact and discretion in the preacher; but which, if judiciously handled, may be productive of the most beneficial effects. The cases which I allude to are those of violent death, caused by drunkenness or quarrelling, suicide, or attempted suicide, a public execution, or any other awfully impressive incident. "People are very attentive to such discourses, and think it behooves them to be so when God is near them, and even over their head."[1] In all such cases weigh well the circumstances, and especially consider the surviving relations of the individual. If there be many, and they respectable, and likely to be present, you had better refrain from noticing the subject; for not only would their feelings be needlessly wounded, but the rest of your congregation would blame you for indiscretion, rather than profit by your admonition: but, on the other hand, if there be no relations, or if the relations of the deceased be addicted to the same practice which caused his death, you need not be so scrupulous about their feelings; though still you should strive to affect rather than wound them. Ways, however, may be found of giving a turn to an affecting incident which will convey the necessary impression, without wounding any one's feelings. There are two

[1] Herbert.

sermons of Cooper's, bound together in a tract, and not, I think, published with his others, in which he avails himself of the circumstance of a young person being killed at a wake, in consequence of fighting when in a drunken state, to censure most strongly the disgraceful scenes which were suffered to take place—accusing the community at large of being participators in homicide, and liable to the charge of blood guiltiness; the consequence of which appeal was, that the parishioners assembled the next day at the vestry, and unanimously agreed to discontinue the custom.[1] Much good may often be effected by a judicious mode of treating such subjects; but when you cannot hit on such a mode, the following rule of Paley may be useful:—"The safest way," he says, "is not to refer to the incidents by any direct allusion, but merely to discourse at the same time on subjects which are allied to, and connected with them."

This is the advice which I have to give you with reference to the choice of a subject; and I would add that you will do well to *give a title to your sermon*—a title which shall designate the subject. By which means you will be obliged to determine in your mind what the subject precisely is, and also will be furnished with a rule which will keep you closely to it.

I have purposely omitted hitherto to say any thing about your *text*, because, as compared with your subject, it is of secondary importance. I am speaking, of course, of texts in a technical sense. The fathers used often to omit texts altogether, and say only, "I design to preach on such and such a subject;" but in the present day, such a proceeding would appear affected, and give offence. Generally speaking, your text and your subject will coincide. Sermons in

[1] Vide Augustini Opera, de Doct. Christ. lib. iv. cap. 24.

which this is the case are the most complete, and the most generally admired.

It is desirable that your text should be a weighty and important sentence of Scripture, "for many will remember the text who will remember nothing else."[1] "I am persuaded," says Venn, "we are very negligent in respect of our texts. Some of the most weighty are never brought before the people: yet there are texts which speak for themselves—you no sooner repeat them than you appear in your high and holy character, as a messenger of the Lord of Hosts." You should invariably make it a rule to use a text in the same sense in which it is found in the Scriptures. Thus, if you wish to preach on progressive sanctification, do not choose for your text the words, "Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward;"[2] nor, "I have a message from God unto thee,"[3] when you are desirous of delivering the Gospel message; because these two texts refer to entirely different subjects.[4] Some preachers will choose ingenious texts, and strike out an application never before dreamt of. Thus, Dr. Arnold, on the text,—"The Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more forever,"[5]—preaches an interesting sermon on the dreadful idea of parting never to meet again; and Dwight on the text, —"In the garden was a new sepulchre,"[6]—describes the occasional evils which mar the fairest scenes. Now it seems to me, that these might have been fairly used as illustrations of the subject; but are injudiciously placed in so prominent a situation as texts inferring a doctrine. The momentary interest, excited by the ingenuity of the thought, is not sufficient to compensate for what must appear a strained application of Scripture. Nevertheless, sometimes an interesting

[1] Burnet. [2] Exod. xiv. 15. [3] Judges iii. 20.
[4] Christian Observer. [5] Exod. xiv. 13. [6] John xix. 41.

train of reflection will flow from a simple incident, as from the text,—"And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old art thou?"[1]—Blair preaches on the improvement of time; and Mr. Newman moralizes touchingly on the ills of human life, from the account of the lame and impotent folk gathered at the pool of Bethesda.[2]*

[1] Genesis xlvii. 8. [2] John v. 2.

*[See Note c, at the End: "Texts."]

LETTER XXI.

ON COLLECTING MATERIALS.

Your text and your subject will, as I have before observed, generally coincide, or nearly so. We will suppose this to be the case, and proceed, on that supposition, to show the best mode of collecting materials.

First, *be quite sure you understand your text:* convince yourself that you know and feel what is "the mind of the Spirit,"—what truth God meant to teach by it. And, with a view to discover this, read the text carefully with the context—read it in the original if you are able; and, in the first instance, use your own judgment, founded on the general teaching of the Church, in preference to consulting commentators, for commentators are too apt to be biassed towards a system. And remember that you yourself are, in some degree, a commentator, and must guard yourself against yourself; for all of us have a bias. In order to satisfy yourself whether you have obtained the true meaning, collate your text with parallel passages;—first from the same author, then from Scripture in general. "All truth being consonant to itself, and all being dictated by one and the self-same Spirit, it cannot be but that an industrious and judicious comparison of place with place must be a singular help for the right understanding of the Scriptures."[1] This

[1] Herbert.

investigation will supply you with a number of hints and arguments which will be useful in working up the subject, and should be carefully noted down. Here you must be diligent in looking at your marginal references, and turning over the leaves of your Concordance: but take care not to be led astray by mere jingling of sound; for the same word often bears different significations; and passages in which the principal word is the same may have little or no connexion together. You will be very liable to this error if you consult only an English Concordance; because, in the English translation of the Bible, the same word is often put for the two different words in the original. Whenever, therefore, you have any doubt as to the meaning of a word, go to the original.[1] After having thus exercised your own judgment, you may peruse as many comments, criticisms, annotations, and paraphrases as your library affords, ancient as well as modern; and it is very desirable that you should read the remarks of authors whose systems of divinity are different; for, as to finding a commentator who is *not* biassed towards a system, that is next to impossible. If you habitually consult one commentator, or one set of commentators, you will be insensibly dragged into their system; but if you make a point of knowing what authors of different opinions say, your judgment will have a chance of being unfettered. Should you find that you have hit on a text the application of which is very much disputed between Christians of different opinions, (as, for instance, the latter part of Romans vii.,) or if the authenticity or genuineness of your text is denied by respectable critics, (as 1 John v. 7,) or different interpretations put upon it by men whose authority should be regarded, (as 1 Peter. iv. 8,) why then you had

[1] You should not be without Schmidt's Greek Concordance and Schleusner's Lexicon.

better choose another text; unless you have some very good reason for the contrary; for it is clear that no very cogent argument can be built on so uncertain a foundation. A want of confidence in the spirit of your text will injuriously affect both your hearers and yourself.

When you are satisfied that you understand your text, then, with a view to its explication and expansion, turn it well over in your mind, and get as much as you can from your own reflection upon it. Consider well every word: there are many words and phrases which require explaining; such, for instance, as have become obsolete, as *prevent, offence, leasing;* and Scriptural idioms and expressions, as *the old man, the new man,—crucified to the world,—gall of bitterness,—body of death,—the kingdom of God,—to quench the Spirit.* Many ideas may be gained from a mere drawing out of the terms of the text; thus Cooper, on the text,—"Enoch walked with God," obtains the greater part of his materials from an ingenious illustration of the term *walked;* for to *walk* with a person implies a state of familiarity and friendship, of intercourse and converse with him. Though this attention to words will often suggest very useful and pertinent matter, yet it is apt to be carried too far. Honest Matthew Henry's exposition of Job i. 4, is liable to this objection. "And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one in his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them." "It was a comfort to this good man to see his children grown up and settled in the world: all his sons were *in houses* of their own, probably married. . . . It added to the comfort to see the brothers so kind to their sisters that they sent for them to feast with them; who were so modest that they would not have gone if they had not been sent for. . . . . They feasted in their *own houses*, not *public houses*, where they would have been more exposed to temptation, and which were not so credita-

ble. We do not find that Job himself feasted with them. . . he considered that the young people would be more free and pleasant if left to themselves."

The foregoing observations relate to cases where the text and subject coincide; those that follow apply equally to sermons in which the discussion of the text is little thought of.

Some writers have much more facility of invention than others; and it is likely you will find your own power of invention, whatever it may be, vary very much at different times. Sometimes, ideas will pour upon you like a flood, and the only difficulty will be how to sift the gold dust from the sand; at other times you will scarcely be able to wring from your unwilling brain a single drop that is good. In order to assist you whenever you may find yourself in this latter predicament, and with a view, also, to aid you in your selection, when the stream of your fancy runs with unusual copiousness, I shall set down a few general questions, which will enable you to draw out your subject with facility and preciseness.

First: Is there any preliminary matter which it would be well to dispose of, before entering upon the main subject of the discourse? Is there any principle which should be laid down; any prejudice or false principle to be removed? Is there any hypothesis, any thing implied and not expressed; any remark, in short, which will help to elucidate the matter in hand?

Secondly: Is there any thing remarkable in the circumstances relating to the text—in the character or situation of the speaker? as, for instance, if your text is from Eccles. i. 2—"Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, all is vanity." You may remark that the words were spoken by one who had experienced all varieties of earthly pomp and pleasure; not by an envious cynic, nor by one who had been cast

down from his high estate, like Wolsey, who exclaimed, "Vain pomp and glory of the world, I hate ye," just when all his goods and chattels, lands and tenements were forfeited. Again—is there any thing remarkable in the *time* or *place*, when and where the words were spoken? as Eph. i. 3—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." These words of triumph and gratitude were written (could we have supposed it?) when St. Paul was a prisoner in chains at Rome. Or is there any thing remarkable in the circumstances or the character of the persons *to whom* the text refers? as, for instance, it will be important to mention that many of the parables of our Lord applied primarily to the Jews; and many parts of the Epistles would be imperfectly understood without reference to the state of parties and circumstances at the time. When I desire you to inquire whether there is any thing remarkable in the circumstances of those addressed, the time, and place, and character of the speaker, I should add, that I mean always with reference to the main scope and intention of your subject. Unless it bears upon this point, it is superfluous to allude to any circumstance, however in itself remarkable. It would be mere waste of time: but very often you will find this extensive topic extremely useful.

Thirdly: Is there any thing remarkable in the *manner*, either with regard to the terms in which the text is stated, or the sentiments conveyed? as when our Saviour begins by saying, "Verily, verily," it would seem that what follows is of more than ordinary importance: so when St. Paul says, "*If it be possible*, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men,"[1] it may be well to note the peculiarity of prefixing the terms "*if it be possible*" to a precept. Again, in

[1] Romans xii. 18.

the text, "It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones."[1] Here there is a marked contrast between the tenderness of God for the least of his creatures, and his stern severity against those who shall cause them to fall.

Any one of the foregoing topics will do for an exordium.

Fourthly: What are the *principal branches* of the subject in hand? Does it divide itself naturally? or does it require an artificial division? I have placed this question early, though, perhaps, you may not yet see sufficiently into the subject to answer it fully; it is desirable, however, that it should be answered soon, and the main branches and divisions settled, as well as the order in which they should be treated.

Fifthly: There is another question which demands an early consideration—that is, Is there *any thing which makes against* your argument or statement? Are there any objections? If so, are they so obvious or important as to require a regular discussion,—and *when* will be the fittest time to discuss them,—and *how* will they best be answered?

Sixthly: Are there any *qualifications* or *limitations* which should be made with reference to the words or subject of the text? as,—"Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat,"[2]—"Swear not at all,"[3]—these texts must be qualified by reference to other parts of Scripture. You will find this topic applicable in a great many cases, when the text apparently contradicts other texts, or when it seems to be in opposition to the analogy of faith, or to common sense; as in the apparent contradiction between St. Paul and St. James with regard to faith and works.

[1] Luke xvii. 1, 2. [2] Matt. vi. 25. [3] Ib. v. 34.

Seventhly: What are the *causes* or *reasons* of the text being delivered? What is the *primary cause* or *principle?* Did it proceed from God's love, or from his wrath, his mercy or his justice? What is the *final cause* or *object?* Is it to warn us against sin? or to lead us to righteousness? to confirm and strengthen, or to chasten and humble us? This topic will branch out into a thousand ramifications which I must leave to your own good sense and ingenuity to discover.

Eighthly: What are the *bearings* or *tendencies*, *the probable consequences* or *certain effects*, whether immediate or remote, of the doctrine or facts contained in the text? This topic also you will easily trace out in its departments.

Ninthly: What are the *relations*, *inferences*, or *corollaries*, which it may be useful to note? You will find that this question will often open a wide field of subject-matter, as in the text,—"Be ye reconciled to God;"[1]—Reconciliation implies previous enmity, future friendship. So a kingdom supposes subjects, laws: a father supposes children, love, obedience, authority. Victory implies a contest, with all its accompaniments, as armour, allies, foes, force, stratagem. So again in the text, "Ask, and it shall be given you,"[2] you may infer that many ask not, from the fact that they have not.

Tenthly: There is a question which may be asked and answered now, but which ought to have been at least seriously considered long ago, and indeed always kept in view—that is, *How is my present subject connected with the great principles of the Gospel?*

Eleventhly: Are there any *different views* in which the subject may be taken? This is a topic of which many preachers avail themselves; but it is not a favourite one

[1] 2 Cor. v. 20. [2] Matt. vii. 7.

with me. After explaining and dilating upon a text in one view, then to go on to treat it in another, seems to be very like pulling down what you have just been building. The different views may be incompatible, and then half your sermon goes for nothing; and as your hearers, perhaps, are not competent to judge which half, an air of doubt and unimportance is thrown over the whole. I think it far better to take a text which has one clear and unequivocal meaning, than to choose one which may be taken in different views. For instance, suppose you preach on Romans vii. 21—"I find a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me;" and proceed to this effect, "Good and able men differ as to the application of the text. Some apply it to St. Paul himself, some to a Jew under the law; let us consider it in both points of view." It is clear that one part of your sermon would be likely to neutralize the other. It would be much better to take decidedly one line, and dwell entirely on that; but if you cannot do this conscientiously, because you have not made up your own mind, still if you think fit to preach on this very striking and important part of Scripture, you may usefully do so, by saying, "Good men differ as to the primary application of this text. I shall not decide between them, but assume, what I suppose none of you will be disposed to deny, that it applies most plainly and forcibly to all of *us*."

The answers to the foregoing questions will have furnished you with sufficient matter to bring you a good way forward in your sermon. The following are questions which will come in towards the close.

Twelfthly: *Is there any thing in what I have said which is liable to be misunderstood or misapplied?* or is there any thing which requires further remark or elucidation? or any thing which is so important that it ought to be repeated and more fully dwelt on?

Thirteenthly: Can I *strengthen* the force of what I have said, or render it more lucid and clear by any examples drawn from Scripture or elsewhere, or by any illustration or simile? I speak here of illustrations which serve to give force or beauty to the main subject; not such as relate to subordinate parts; for these may be reserved till the time of composing.

Fourteenthly: Is there any *contrast* or *comparison* by which you may set forth your subject more strongly or more agreeably? The conduct of the apostles before and after the descent of the Holy Ghost, affords a remarkable contrast. This topic will be found very useful in conjunction with the next.

Fifteenthly: *To how many sorts of persons does my subject apply?* how may it be best applied? and what part of it requires most particular application? Though I have set down these questions here, yet they ought to have been well considered by you long before. Indeed, when you first chose your subject, you should have had an eye to the application of it.

Sixteenthly, and lastly: How shall I leave the main point of my discourse most deeply impressed on the mind of my hearers?

Other questions will probably occur to you; and each text will suggest questions peculiar to itself, by which you may turn over in your mind the matter of it. But those which I have set down will, I trust, prove serviceable as general directions to enable you to draw out your subject, and collect a stock of materials.

If your memory is not good, you will find it useful to note down the ideas, arguments, and illustrations, which occur to you. It does not follow, that all these materials are to be used. You will have to select those which you judge to be the best; but do not put pen to paper, except

for the purpose of making notes, until you have gone through this process. I am addressing you, you know, as a beginner; when you have gained more knowledge and experience, you will not need to work so much by rule. At present you must collect your stores,—

"Apis Matinæ
More modoque,
Grata carpentis thyma *per laborem*
Plurimum."

Your task, though *grateful*, will of necessity be laborious: hereafter, if you persevere,

"Concines majore poeta plectro."[1]

[1] Hor. Od. iv. 9. 33.

LETTER XXII.

WHAT MATERIALS AND TOPICS SHOULD GENERALLY BE THROWN ASIDE.

Having made these remarks upon the sources from whence you are to draw your materials, it may be well to mention what materials and topics should be thrown aside, and made no use of by the Christian minister.

First, you should admit *nothing extraneous*. A sermon is too short a composition to allow of digressions. "It is a hard task," says Swift, "but he who wishes to be a forcible preacher, must submit to it: viz., to cut off without regret or mercy whatever is superfluous," whatever does not tend to enforce or illustrate the main point. Should you happen to strike into a rich vein of new ideas, you must cover it up carefully, till you have worked out the old one, and open it again next week.

Except for particular reasons,—as, for instance, when you are preaching a *course* of sermons, *those topics should be unnoticed, which every one admits;* as the existence of a God; the fact that Jesus Christ is the Son of God; the certainty of a future retribution. The very discussion of these plain and acknowledged truths is disadvantageous; as it only serves to raise a doubt where none before existed. If, unfortunately, infidel opinion have infected your neighbour-

hood, then it will be necessary to confirm your hearers' mind in those elemental truths of religion.

Avoid an "impertinent way which some persons have of *needlessly setting forth the originals.*"[1] Two-thirds of one of Paley's sermons are taken up with proving that "*covetousness* does not mean *covetousness*," but *inordinate desire:* so also in one of Dr. Parr's discourses, the author takes great pains to prove that 1 Cor. xi. 28, should not be translated, "let a man *examine* himself, and so let him eat," but, let a man *distinguish* himself. This is a great mistake in preaching. Our English translation is, on the whole, so correct, and the consequence of unsettling the minds of the common people so prejudicial, that a prudent preacher will carefully abstain from showing his erudition in this manner. Critical knowledge, though very useful and necessary for yourself in your study, is out of place in the pulpit; and indeed the exhibition of it is fortunately well nigh exploded. Sometimes, however, when verbal criticism is required, in order to remove some important misunderstanding, an exception should be made in its favour; as if you preach on 1 Cor. xi. 29, where it is said that "he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh *damnation* to himself;"[2] or on the text in which we are bid to "*hate* father and mother:"—in such cases as these, a critical explanation is needed; but it should be as brief and modest as possible, and not made the vehicle for a pedantic display of learning.

"*Never indulge in the poor vanity of handling a text in a new manner;*" that is to say, in a manner which you *know* to be different from that which is generally received, and adopt it for that very reason, in order to show your ingenuity. It is ten to one that you will be wrong.

Never go beyond the Scriptures on any subject. "Speak where they speak, be silent where they are silent."

[1] Bishop Burnet. [2] Paley, Sermon xi.

Have nothing to do with *curious mysteries*, metaphysical subtilties, speculations of the schools, and foolish and unlearned questions;—as, whether or no our Saviour might have come into the world sooner after the fall than he did? whether he might have suffered unknown? how all the birds and beasts got into the ark? what was the mark set on Cain, and the thorn in St. Paul's flesh? and similar speculations which are common in old writers, and not altogether unknown in new.

"Never raise an old heresy from the grave where it has slept quietly for centuries; for fear your hearers should say, We never thought of that till Mr. —— mentioned it: but what he said in explanation was not very satisfactory after all."[1] Also, in ordinary parish preaching, and I may say in all preaching, avoid unnecessary *controversy*, and questions which gender strife. Such are the topics which Milton represents the fallen angels as discussing—they

> "Reasoned high,
> Of providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate,
> Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute;
> And found no end in wandering mazes lost."[2]

The *end* of such discussions is too commonly to unsettle men's minds, and call forth the angry passions of a corrupt nature; and they more frequently terminate in heresy or skepticism than in edification. "Controversy has an obvious tendency to warp the understanding and sour the temper—it is good neither for yourself nor for your flock."

Occasions may sometimes arise when you may be *forced* to notice controverted points:—when, for instance, heterodox opinions have been studiously promulgated, and received amongst your flock. Great discretion and Christian charity are required on such occasions. How unedifying it is to

[1] Whately. [2] Paradise Lost, Book ii.

hear neighbouring clergymen—preachers, perhaps, in the same town, nay, the morning and evening lectures in the same pulpit—engaged in angry controversy. It were well if the fifty-second Canon were in such cases enforced, which expressly declares that "there shall be no public opposition between preachers." "If any preacher shall in the pulpit, particularly or namely, of purpose impugn or confute any doctrine delivered by any other preacher in the same Church, or in any Church near adjoining, before he hath acquainted the Bishop of the diocese therewith, and received order from him what to do in that case; because upon such public dissenting and contradicting, there may grow up much offence or disquietness to the people; the churchwardens or party grieved, shall forthwith signify the same to the said Bishop, and not suffer the said preacher any more to occupy that place which he hath once abused." If you should at any time unfortunately find yourself forced, by cogent reasons, to notice any subject of controversy, my advice is, that you carefully refrain from assuming the air of a combatant, and content yourself with setting forth, in plain and moderate language, what is the Scriptural truth. Some persons rush into controversy without understanding what it is they have to fight with; they "dress up a man of straw, in hideous vestments," and then amuse themselves by firing at it. "If you *do* think it necessary to combat error, at least take pains to know what that error really is."

The question of admitting *politics* to the pulpit is a very difficult one,—the difficulty arising from the ambiguity of the term *politics*. Undoubtedly *party politics should be proscribed;* yet the political duties of men are so vitally connected with religion, that it becomes impossible in all cases to separate them. During the agitation of the reform bill, however strong the feelings of the preacher, it was his duty to refrain from touching on a subject on which good men as

well as bad were divided, and which it was impossible even to allude to at the time, without an excitement of worldly passion. But when Bristol was in flames—Derby and Nottingham in the hands of a mob, then it was time to preach peace, and to put men in mind "to be subject to principalities and powers," and to "obey magistrates."[1] There are some political subjects which alike interest the whole community; and may legitimately and powerfully be used: such, at the time, were the great events of the late war, especially its providential termination.

Be very cautious in the use of irony. "There is nothing that renders controversy more galling or less convincing than a sneer; and if we wish to confirm Dissenters in their Dissent, and make them hate the Church of England, we could not take a readier course." Generally speaking, irony, and almost universally, sarcasms, and sneering, are the sign of an unchristian spirit, argue an irreverent disposition of the mind, and certainly do not tend to produce in the heart of the hearers that pious and charitable feeling which every preacher of the Gospel should be most anxious to infuse. Irony is either jocose or serious. The former, which is called *bantering* or *raillery*, is out of place in the pulpit, because the business of the pulpit is serious; but serious irony usually partakes of, and diffuses, a feeling of bitterness. Above all, never make an ironical use of Scripture.

Similar blame belongs to the sarcastic use of party terms, as *orthodox*, *evangelical*, *new lights*, *semi-papists*, *saints*, *Pharisees*. "Why," a modern writer well asks, "should a man be blamed for *sanctified* looks, which, if genuine, betoken the presence of that spirit, 'without which no man shall see the Lord?'"

A tone of serious raillery may sometimes be used with

[1] Titus iii. 1.

advantage, especially in attacking the follies of men. Instances occur of its use by inspired persons, as when Elijah mocked the priests of Baal. "Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked."[1] There is a forcible tone of serious raillery in the following passage from Cooper's Serm. ii. vol. i: "Surely you mean to do this [forsake the service of sin] *some time?* Why delay the doing of it? Why delay to be freed from the bondage of the devil, from the guilt of sin, from the wrath of God? Is sin so profitable? Is the state of a sinner so safe, so happy, that any should be loth to leave it? Can you be happy too soon? Too soon be a child of God, and an heir of heaven? Too soon be delivered from the danger of dying eternally? Would you gratify and please your worst enemy a little longer before you leave his service? Would you fix sin a little deeper in your heart before you try to root it out? Is your life too long? Are you afraid of having too much time, and of beginning the great work of repentance too soon? Believe it, Satan is not idle in destroying your soul, though you are negligent in saving it." In this extract there is nothing of the bitterness or uncharitable spirit, which too often accompanies irony, and which in ordinary cases renders it so necessary to be avoided.

The following extract is from Heber. He is ridiculing the idea of angels being imaginary beings. "When the Psalmist speaks of man as 'made a little lower than the angels,' could he mean that a real existence is at all inferior to a phantom, or a rational being to the accidents of the material world, however figuratively described, or however providentially directed? Is it of a band of shadows, a troop of rhetorical ornaments, of which Christ is said to be *the head?*

[1] 1 Kings xviii. 27. See also 1 Cor. iv. 8. 2 Cor. xi. 19.

or can accidents *desire to look into* the mysteries of the Gospel? are they non-entities to which in the world to come the righteous are to be *made equal?*"[1]

In the use of irony, take care it is not mistaken for sober seriousness. Children read Gulliver's Travels and Cook's Voyages with the same degree of belief; and many older persons were taken in by Sir Edward Seward's narrative.

Admit no jests or extravagancies into your sermon, such as abound in South and other writers of that date. Remember the often quoted lines of Cowper.

> "'Tis pitiful
> To court a grin, when you should woo a soul;
> To break a jest, where pity should inspire
> Pathetic exhortation, and t' address
> The skittish fancy with facetious tales,
> When sent with God's commission to the heart."

Besides jests and sarcasms, *avoid all vulgar and too familiar sentiments*, and any thing which calls up gross and carnal ideas; but on the other hand do not affect excessive refinement. Of course in this respect a difference should be made according to the character of your congregation. Plain and homely sayings, and common illustrations which would suit a country congregation, are inadmissible before a more refined audience. Undoubtedly, quaint, or even homely expressions, will sometimes "hitch" themselves in the mind, and will be remembered when more serious matter is forgotten. If any such occur, you should ask yourself this question—a question which may, indeed, be often asked with reference to much of the materials—"Will this thought be likely to do good?" If not, throw it aside.

Avoid too hasty and unqualified assertions, as when Paley says, that "the Scripture, which speaks of regeneration,

[1] Sermon iii. vol. i.

conversion, new birth, means nothing—nothing, that is, to *us:* nothing to be found or sought for in the present circumstances of Christians."

Sometimes, even when convinced yourself of an opinion, it is not well to propound it, unless you are sure that you are convinced on good grounds. Do not attempt to *demonstrate* the doctrine of the Trinity from the appearance of three divine persons to Abraham on the plains of Mamre,[1] nor from the text, "Let us make man in our image."[2] These texts are good as corroborative evidence, but are insufficient *proof.*

Again, *avoid uninteresting matter*, however important. I do not think the arguments in the Epistle to the Hebrews, highly important as they are in themselves, are interesting to a modern congregation. Discussion on prophecies, and still more on types, do not seem to take general attention. Therefore, if you ever get on these topics, discuss them shortly. Generally, those subjects only fix the attention of your hearers which are plainly, closely, and directly connected with their salvation—except, indeed, controversial subjects,—for these they unfortunately have too generally itching ears: but you must not gratify them.

Lastly.—Let there be nothing in excess—"ne quid nimis,"[3] not too much doctrine, nor too much history, nor too much argument; (a few good arguments in a sermon are better than many;) not too much of any one sort or form of argument, as interrogation, antithesis, simile. Let not your metaphors nor illustrations be far fetched—like "truths which are wrung from the subject," but let them "flow freely, like the juice of the grape, from the first pressing of the vintage."[4] Do not exhaust your subject; let there not be too many brilliant and sparkling passages—they weary

[1] Gen. xviii.
[2] Gen. i. 26.
[3] See Claude's Essay.
[4] Bacon.

and distract the hearer: a striking truth, which would have been well remembered and deeply rooted, is driven out by something equally, or more striking, immediately following; just as the traveller's mind is overloaded, and his admiration wearied by a too rapid succession of novel and striking sights. *It is necessary that there should be repose*—that is to say, after a burst of brilliant language and ideas, should succeed some plain truth or narrative, dressed in the simplest garb; many eloquent sermons are spoiled by the neglect of this rule. The grand truths of Scripture are equally adapted to either the most brilliant or the most simple language. The proper tone of language depends not so much on the subjects themselves, as on the circumstances of their introduction.

Even of good materials there may be too much. I shall not venture to express an opinion as to the precise length of which a sermon ought to be. Bishop Wilkins says that "one hour is allowed by all to be a competency." Modern congregations would, perhaps, be content with half that time. And you must, in some degree, consult their taste, and allow for circumstances. You do no good when you address a wearied congregation. Long sermons in a morning will keep your country parishioners at home, for they dine at one: long sermons in the afternoon will send them to sleep, for they have just dined. In the evening you may allow yourself more latitude, for they have come to pass away their time. But each clergyman must judge for himself, by observing how long he is able to keep alive the attention of his hearers. The cause of long sermons is not in general the abundance of materials, but carelessness in composing, and want of revision. A certain writer sending a manuscript to another, apologized for its length, on the ground that he had *no time to make it shorter*. Compression is certainly one of the most difficult points in style.

LETTER XXIII.

ON THE METHOD OF COMPOSING.

The philosophers of Laputa constructed a machine, by the help of which, with a little manual labor, they proposed to write books, of all sorts, from an epic poem to a sermon. It was so contrived, that by placing in it all the words of the language, and then turning a wheel, an infinite variety of combinations came forth. These they carefully noted down, and there was nothing to be done then but to arrange them. In like manner I shall suppose you to have got together the materials of your sermon, not only by the exercise of your mind, but partly by the exertion of a little manual labor, in turning over the leaves of your Bible and Concordance; and now all that remains, is to put them in order.

Young sermon-writers meet with three principal difficulties in composition; some find themselves unable to make the scheme of a sermon; some are slow to clothe their ideas with language; others, again, fail in giving spirit and energy to their composition. The first cannot construct the skeleton, the second cannot find the flesh and blood, the third cannot breathe into it the breath of life.

If you find the first difficulty, you will be inclined, perhaps, to have recourse to Simeon's voluminous work, the "Horæ Homileticæ." But this proceeding I should by no means countenance. The Horæ Homileticæ has been truly called the easy-chair of theology." I should just as soon counsel you to furnish your study with a patent

lounging-chair, lined with air cushions. The more drowsy and inactive you find yourself, the more must you eschew such an indulgence as an arm-chair ; the more you feel the want of assistance in composition, the less right have you, as a beginner, to use the Horæ Homileticæ. I do not say that you are *never* to avail yourself of such a help. Should you have a very large parish under your care, and three or four sermons a week to prepare—or should you arrive at the dignity of Archdeacon, and have " the care of all the churches coming upon you daily," then, in order to husband your time, you need not scruple to employ such aid—that is, if you then feel the want of it ; but, as a beginner, I should strongly caution you against it : once get into the practice, and you will never write a good sermon as long as you live. If you *must* get the frame-work of your sermon from some external source, the best plan is to analyze a good sermon of some standard author ; then lay the volume aside, and write it over again in your own language. This will help to improve your invention, by obliging you to anatomize, and observe minutely, the composition of good authors.

But the plan which I should recommend is, at all events, *to make your own scheme.* And first draw up a brief outline of the principal topics, and keep it before you. To experienced sermon-writers this process will be less necessary ; but to a beginner it will be found useful in several ways. It will prevent you from wandering far from the subject ; or, at any rate, it will help to bring you back again ; and it will save you from the very common fault of being too diffuse in the beginning, and leaving no room for the development of your materials. The time so occupied will often be found to have been economically spent ; for a carefully made skeleton will save you the trouble of writing your sermon over twice. Not that I would dissuade you from writing it over twice, or even thrice, if you have time ; for the very

process of writing impresses it on the mind, and will help you very much in the delivery.

The design and composition of a sermon is well illustrated by the example of a painter. Look at a chef-d'œuvre of some first-rate artist, and you will see that his object has been to depict some *one* action or idea; and that all the parts of the picture are made subservient to the general effect. Is the subject, for instance, our Saviour on the cross? The principal light is thrown on the figure of the Redeemer, which is set forth more strongly by the surrounding gloom. Patient endurance is marked by contrasting his graceful body with the distorted limbs of the malefactors. His placid countenance is rendered more conspicuously divine by the ferocious visages of the soldiers, and the anguish of his weeping disciples. Every thing, in short, of circumstance, of drawing, and colouring, is so conceived as to direct the minds of those who look upon it to the principal object of interest. Thus, in preaching, *you should choose one principal object*, and group your materials so as best to illustrate *that;* keeping the main design always in your mind's eye.*

Such being your rule—which will be more fully developed as we proceed—you will next consider into what principal heads your subject should be divided; as the painter considers how the different objects should be disposed on the canvas. Look at the celebrated picture, by Raphael, of St. Paul at Athens. The subject is the preaching of the Apostle. This evidently divides itself into two parts—the energy and power of the preacher, and the effect produced on the hearers. Accordingly, you will see that though the principal figure is St. Paul himself, yet that the light is thrown on the countenances of the hearers. Your eye wanders first to one and then to the other; and yet the subject is one and undivided—it is *the preaching of St. Paul.*

* [See Note D at end: UNITY.]

After the principal branches of the subject, then come the subdivisions and separate paragraphs to be considered,—the filling up the canvas. It is desirable that before you begin to compose, the whole subject should be before your mind,—not only in its principal divisions, but also in its minute details, as far as you are able to grasp them. But, to comprehend a subject in detail is the work of few but practised masters. You should, however, always attempt it, because no labour so much strengthens the mind. And here is the principal use of your skeleton,—to assist you in working up the materials, so that they shall hang well together; that each paragraph may be complete in itself, yet well dove-tailed and connected with the rest; that each clause may be in its proper place; and the several members and sections of the composition stand out in just relief, and have a definite and proper relation to the rest. And note that each principal division of your subject ought to have a degree of unity in itself, and be brought to a close in a marked and striking manner.

You will say, Well! now, at last I may begin to write my sermon. But stop, I have one point still to call your attention to, and that is the style of *colouring*. It is very desirable, not, indeed, as an essential requisite, but as a primary beauty, that *your sermon should take its complexion and character from the text*. If the text be in the shape of a declaration, a precept, a promise, a threatening, an invitation, an appeal, or an argument, something of the same form and character should be given to the sermon. Or, again, if the text be tender and compassionate, or indignant and menacing, admonitory, reproachful, conciliatory, or encouraging, something of the same spirit should be infused into the discourse. Take, for instance, Cooper's sermon[1]

[1] Serm. ii. vol. i. on Rom. vi. 21

on the text, "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.' The writer has not only considered the mere import of the words, which, in themselves, are full of instruction; but he has adopted the form and character of the text. It is an appeal to their remembrance, and is, in form, partly interrogatory, partly declaratory. Such, also, is the form of the sermon. He asks, what fruit had Eve in her sin but shame and death? What fruit had Judas? He appeals to *good* men, who had left the ways of sin, "You, I feel assured, will readily confess that you found no fruit in the ways of sin." He then summons the drunkard, the discontented, the revengeful, and passionate, the sensual, and worldly, and asks them separately, what fruit they have. "There is not one," he concludes, "whose conscience, if fairly suffered to speak, would not testify that sin yields no present fruit." In the last part of the sermon, he sets forth, declaratively, that the end of sin is death. Tillotson, on the same text, in Sermons clxii. clxiii. clxiv. clxv. has entirely neglected to avail himself of this method of treating the subject, which gives so much spirit and beauty to Cooper's sermon.

Sermon i. vol. viii. from the same author, is another instance of the transfusion of the spirit and character of the text into the discourse. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."[1] A few pages are occupied in showing how the office of ministers of the Gospel resembles that of ambassadors; the greater part of the sermon is devoted to delivering the gracious message of the Gospel in the character of an ambassador.

Again, in Sermon v. vol. i. on the text—"Give an account of thy stewardship," he introduces a well conceived

[1] 2 Cor. v. 20.

address of the great Judge to each one of us on the last day reminding us of the gifts we have received, and demanding what use we have made of them. And Sermon iii. vol. viii. is an instance of the argumentative style, from the text—"Come now, and let us *reason* together."[1]

There is no greater beauty, in point of composition, nor any thing which renders a sermon more striking and interesting, than thus to seize the primary idea, or pervading character of your text, and apply it to your composition.

Another mode of giving an appropriate colouring and distinct character to your sermon, is to consider *the part of the Scripture from which the text is taken.* A subject taken from the Gospels should be treated in a simple and didactic manner; one from the Epistles might assume a more argumentative, or doctrinal character. Probably you will most frequently choose your text from the New Testament: yet you will do well, for variety's sake, sometimes to take a subject from one of the earlier books. Suppose your text is from the book of Job. In this case you should read the book attentively, and endeavour to imbue your mind with the same spirit. Your subject may be the contemplation of some of the more difficult points of God's ordinary providential arrangements; your language may assume something of a figurative and poetic style; and your illustrations may be drawn from the manners and scenery of the age and country in which the patriarch lived. The parched sands and drought, the mirage and the simoom, the palm tree and spice groves—all these things should be present before you; not to be stuck in, at all events, like the painter's cypress tree, but so that they may naturally fall into their places, if wanted, and give a tone and colouring to your composition. Or, again, if your subject be taken from the book of Daniel, here, a thousand ideas would naturally rise in your mind, of

[1] Isaiah i. 18.

the revolutions of nations, the rise and fall of dynasties, with a corresponding train of historical illustration. Or, if it be from the book of Proverbs—in this case your discourse would most appropriately fall into a practical discussion of the affairs of ordinary life. The book of Psalms, again, furnishes the most touching subjects of devotional piety, and suggests ample materials to preserve the keeping. I do not say that very good sermons may not be written, without any reference to this principle of composition; still, I think that our most admired sermon-writers have either aimed at, or fallen into it, instinctively; and you will do well to have it in your eye when you set yourself to compose.

And now, at length, the course is cleared—the barriers are removed. You have been champing the bit, and pawing the ground long enough. It is time to give you your head, and throw the bridle on your neck. Away, then!—but remember, now you are once off, I shall not allow you to stop when you please. If you begin to flag too soon, I shall not spare the spur. In plain terms, when you once begin to write your sermon, you should *write it off with as little interruption as possible*. While the afflatus and glow of composition is upon you—while your head is full and your heart warm, you should pour "yourself forth upon your paper," freely and fluently. It should be "the gushing out from the well-spring of the heart." Do not now pause to inquire and investigate; do not think of correcting, amending, or polishing; care not for your rules of rhetoric; but go on without rest or pause—"nec mora nec requies"—until either you have finished your course, or are fairly out of breath. I should even advise you to leave blanks, rather than stop to seek for words. By this mode your sermon will have all the freshness and animation of the extemporaneous style—probably more; for you will not, when you preach it, be embarrassed for words, or nervous from fear of failure.

What I have said, however, requires some qualification. Though I recommend you to write as much as you can—the whole sermon, if possible—at a sitting, I hardly expect that you will be able to conform entirely to this rule. Your mind will probably flag, and it is not desirable that you should go on when jaded. One division of your sermon, perhaps, will be found as much as you can manage; or you might compose the main part, and reserve the application for another time. And when you resume your labour after an interval, it is a good rule, suggested by Quinctilian, to go back two or three pages, that you may gather up the train of your ideas, and come up with more force to the place where you left off; as a man retires a few paces, in order to gain impetus before he leaps.[1]

The principal difficulty which you will here meet with, is this—when you have written your sermon off in the manner described, it will often, perhaps generally, happen, that, notwithstanding all your endeavours to express yourself well, your composition will not be good enough in point of style for the pulpit; especially if you have to preach to a town congregation. In the ardour of composition you will have overrun yourself, and slipped into a careless style; sometimes mounting up towards the borders of bombast, sometimes descending to too great homeliness and familiarity. You will find also that some of your paragraphs or clauses have not fallen into their right places. Under these circumstances, there is no alternative, but the *limæ labor*. You must re-arrange those parts which are disorderly, "supply deficiencies, correct improprieties, enlighten what is obscure, familiarize what is too high, strengthen the weak parts, animate the languid," and correct and amend whatever offends the ear—and then write it all over again. To

[1] Quinctil. lib. x. cap. 3.

this, as a beginner, you must make up your mind to submit. But observe, the more thought you have bestowed on your subject beforehand, the less will your composition be likely to need correction ;[1] and in proportion as the matter of your sermon is impressive or interesting, and your manner earnest and natural, there will be the less need of correctness of style. Still, even with the best possible materials, correctness of style is an improvement ; and it is unsafe, (as I have more than once remarked when listening to a sermon,) even for the best preachers to trust to their powers of delivery for passing off an ill-written and ill-arranged composition. I am aware that many persons are averse to the *limæ labor*, not from idleness, but on principle ; they do not like a composition to smell of the lamp ; it takes away, they think, from its ease and persuasiveness. Undoubtedly, if it be so, this is a fault. Still it is better to give your congregation the idea that you have been taking too *much* pains for them, than too *little*. Nothing detracts so much from the effect of a sermon as a manifest want of respect for those whom you address, from whatever source it may arise. There is this also to be taken into consideration, that if you go on in careless composition, you will be careless always ; whereas, if you take pains to improve, your pains will soon be needless.

Of the pains bestowed in composition by our best sermon-writers, I am not aware that there is much account preserved. There are, indeed, some of Barrow's sermons written four or five times over in his own hand : and the editor of Massillon's "Petite Carême," mentions, as a prodigy, that each discourse was composed in ten or twelve days. Bishop Jebb also was an exceedingly laborious composer. But, from

[1] Rectius erit ab initio sic opus ducere, ut cœlandum, non ex integro fabricandum sit.—Quinctil., lib. x. cap. 3.

the known practice and extant works of other authors, it may be collected that correct and careful composition by no means implies want of ease in the production, but rather the reverse. Pope has declared that,

> "Ease in writing flows from art, not chance;
> As those move easiest, who have learn'd to dance."

And not only ease, but spirit may also be attained in the same manner. No author ever used more labour in his composition than Sterne, nor at the same time is there any who writes with more apparent ease and spirit. The same, I believe, is true of Burke and Addison, and, in poetry, of Moore and Burns: the simplicity of the former, and the *naïveté* of the latter, are the work of consummate art. The toil of composition is well illustrated in the instances given by Moore, in his Life of Sheridan, of the manner in which that clever writer would work up a favourite idea; writing and re-writing it, turning it over in all possible forms and combinations, until it came forth at last in the most perfect and pointed shape. It is not, of course, the object of the preacher to attain any thing equal to the brilliant and cutting style of Sheridan's witty dialogues. Still, even in sermons, not only ease but a degree of pointedness and concentration should be aimed at, especially by a preacher whose powers of delivery are not great; for nothing helps delivery so much as clear and forcible arrangement of the matter, and well constructed and pointed sentences.

I have said a good deal on the need of care in correcting,—more, perhaps, than some might deem advisable,—because I consider it to be absolutely necessary *to a beginner*, at least to by far the majority of beginners: for very few begin with a style even tolerably correct. Still, it must be admitted, that compositions are often spoiled by too much polishing. As it has been remarked of Robert Hall's ser-

mons—"We often desiderate something of that brave neglect, that unpolished grandeur, which more especially becomes the lips of him who is speaking the words of eternal life."[1] The question is, how to account for the failure of some and the success of others, so that we may attain the due medium, and acquire the talent of improving what is bad, without spoiling what is good. I think the following will, perhaps, illustrate the point in question. A man sits to a portrait painter, who at the first rough sketch produces a faithful and striking likeness. He takes it home to improve it, and when he brings it again it is spoiled. Every stroke the painter added has made it worse, instead of improving it. The spirited sketch is daubed over and effaced, and the likeness entirely lost. What is the cause of this failure? It is this,—that the painter did not carry in his mind's eye a correct idea of what his portrait *ought to be.* Just so, unless you know, and have a clear impression of what your style ought to be, you will often do more harm than good by polishing your first composition. You may strike off "currente calamo" a bold design, but when you come to polish it, every alteration will but help to spoil it, simply because you do not know what is good style and what is bad; you do not know what it is to improve, and what to spoil. You have touched and retouched, when you ought to have known that the first conception and execution were excellent. You were not satisfied with the foam on your horse's mouth, and the "terrible glory of his nostrils," which your first stroke had so vividly portrayed; but you must needs add and alter, here a little and there a little, till the spirit is departed. Thus "Isocrates spent fifteen years in adjusting the periods of his Panegyric, and spoiled it at last." What is the remedy for this evil? How are you to know when to re-touch and when to stay your hand? There

[1] Christian Observer.

is no remedy but *to learn what good style really is.* The remarks which I have made on style will, I hope, be of some use, if you will attend to them: but the surest plan to improve your taste and judgment is, *carefully to study the best models.* Until you know good style when you see it, you cannot, except by instinct, make your own like it. Make it a rule, whenever you wish to add fresh matter, to reconstruct the sentence or paragraph. Do not sew "purple patches" on the old materials; the legitimate object of the *limæ labor* is to condense and simplify, not to embellish.

To a person who has an inveterately dull and crawling style I should recommend that, before composing, he should take up a volume of some writer whose style is even to a fault the reverse; such as Chalmers or Melvill. It is something like the plan, pursued with success, of teaching a person whose handwriting is cramped, to write a good hand in six lessons. The teacher directs his pupil to write in the excess of scrawling, so that three or four letters fill a line; and this is gradually brought down to what is correct. Only if you ever adopt this mode, be careful that you do not fall into the opposite extreme from that which you want to avoid: do not mistake scrawling for good writing; nor Melvill's and Chalmers's for good style,—at least such as may be safely imitated.

Before concluding this letter, I will just mention a plan which from experience I have found good. You can never be certain of the effect of a sermon before you have preached it. What I recommend, then, is this—After you have preached a sermon, mark with a pencil any parts which it has struck you, in the delivery, should be cancelled or improved. Note when your congregation seemed interested, and where their attention began to flag, with a view

to correct your sermon for another occasion. And, besides these memoranda, keep your old manuscript, and use it for a note book; and whenever, in the course of reading or meditation, especially in studying the Scripture, or conversing with your parishioners, any fresh arguments or illustrations occur to you, note them down carefully in their proper place in the sermon. Locke has observed, that the most valuable of our thoughts are those which drop into the mind as it were by accident: and Paley agrees that they are preferable to those "which are forced by pumping." By this process of noting down your thoughts as they arise you will be enabled at some future time to write your sermon over again with much additional matter. I have found sermons prepared in this way more satisfactory than any others. They join to the advantage of Horace's plan,—"nonum prematur in annum,"—the additional benefit of having been once tried already.

If you do not adopt some plan of this sort, but keep your old sermons, and preach them over again without improvement, you will be disappointed in the effect. As juvenile productions, fresh from your heart, you preached them with satisfaction and benefit. They were the best you could then afford, and the interest and energy with which you delivered them communicated itself sympathetically to your congregation. But, as you grow older, the case is altered. Topics which were formerly fresh and interesting, now appear trite and old; and appearing so to you, they will seem so also to your congregation from your very manner of preaching. Therefore whenever you bring out "old things from your treasury," take pains to freshen them up and renovate them in the manner described, so as to be yourself satisfied with the composition; and then, being intrinsically better than before, their effect is likely to be proportionally

more satisfactory to yourself and impressive to your congregation.[1]

[1] I think by far the majority of preachers would, as beginners, find the above remarks, on the method of composing, useful. Undoubtedly it may be said of *some* prose writers, as of poets, *nascuntur*, *non fiunt*: but this is not so universally true of one class as of the other. There is no law, human or Divine, which prevents men of moderate ability from being good preachers; but a man cannot be a good preacher without *some* power of composition, either intuitive or acquired.

LETTER XXIV.

ON THE EXORDIUM.

Having spoken generally on the method of composing, we come now to treat more particularly of the mode of disposing the materials. All that can be pronounced positively on the necessary parts of a sermon is, that every sermon must have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Even this truism might be disputed; as some preachers dispense with an exordium, and others have no conclusion properly so called. Others, again, so construct their sermon that the beginning, the middle, and end, might safely change places without any great detriment to its effect. However, as most good sermons have three distinct parts—exordium, discussion and conclusion—we will begin by considering the former.

To me it appears that the exordium is far from being an unimportant part of a sermon; but that, on the contrary, it deserves particular attention. It is, in all things, a great point to make a favourable impression. Besides, your congregation are more disposed to listen at the beginning than at any other time. Therefore, it should be your object to make the most of your opportunity to fix their attention. If the exordium is good, it will ensure a favourable reception to your sermon, for a while at least; whereas, if otherwise, it may be difficult afterwards to arrest the attention of your hearers.

The theory of an exordium is this.—You find the minds of your hearers unoccupied and unmoved. Your exordium ought to be so contrived as to remove their indifference. It should turn their attention to the particular object of your sermon; and leave them desirous of hearing you further, impressed with the idea that what you have to say is worth attending to. When the exordium has been delivered, they should be, as a physician would say, "in a state of gentle excitement." Hence, in the first place, your exordium should be *interesting;* not flat and common-place, but engaging and agreeable.

A good deal will depend on your own manner. If you seem to take little interest yourself, your congregation will be similarly unconcerned. But if your own mind is evidently filled with the importance of your subject, you will scarcely fail to interest your hearers.

But further, in order that the exordium may be interesting, it should either move the feelings, or fix the understanding. With a view to the former, it should be pitched in the same key with the discourse itself. Thus, on Christmas or Easter day, your manner and matter would naturally be joyous and elevating; on Good Friday, or on the occasion of a funeral sermon, a sad and solemn air, and serious reflections, would best introduce the subject. On a fast day, you would commence in a somewhat stern and serious manner; and the language of your exordium should correspond with your manner. So when about to bring forward some lofty mystery, your exordium should be more than usually impressive and elevated, in order to prepare the mind for reverence and admiration. Sometimes, if you wish to strike your hearers forcibly, your exordium may be in contrast with their preconceived affections; for nothing fixes the attention more than contrast. In all these ways may you interest their feelings. At other times address rather their

understanding. Set before them some striking and important truths. Show them that the subject of your discussion is worth their attention, their serious attention; interesting to all—interesting to them in particular. Do not, however, tell your hearers every Sunday that the subject you are about to preach on is the most important and interesting of any; and do not assert that it is so at all, without giving some good reason.

Secondly: *The exordium should be generally rather cool and grave than otherwise*, because the minds of your hearers are unmoved and unexcited. On this principle, the language should be clear and simple, not loaded with metaphors and ornaments of speech, nor couched in the form of interrogatories or violent exclamations. At the same time it should be carefully written; for your hearers are more disposed to criticise at that time than at any other. Their mind is not sufficiently excited to bear any thing but what is simple and correct: as the stomach, when sensitive, will not bear high food. But this rule is not universal. The commencement of the first oration of Cicero against Catiline, beginning, "Quousque tandem abutere, Catilina, patientiâ nostrâ," is often quoted as an instance of departure from grave exordium.[1] When the minds of the hearers are already moved with passion, there is no need to excite them gradually; you have only to strike the same key. It is so in Massillon's celebrated exordium on the funeral of Louis XIV. "Dieu seul est grand." When you have attained eminence in the pulpit, and your congregation habitually expect to hear something which shall elevate and affect them, you may open your sermon with some such striking exordium; but until then, you will succeed best by being cool, grave, and simple.

[1] See Quinctilian.

Thirdly: An exordium should not be harsh and angry, but rather *affectionate and conciliatory*. By the former, you would be in danger of alienating the feelings of your hearers, and disposing them to cavil and resist. Generally speaking, therefore, reproof should come after conviction. But, on this subject I have spoken at large in a former letter.[1]

Fourthly: Your exordium should be *modest, unpresuming, and respectful*,[2] both in matter and manner. Arrogance is at all times offensive in a preacher, but most of all in the exordium: indeed, all faults are then most conspicuous.

Fifthly: Your exordium should be *brief*, "because people are naturally anxious to know what the minister would be at, and to have him take his main business in hand."[3] Besides, if he takes up too much time in the exordium, there may not be enough left for the due discussion of the subject.

Sixthly: If you preach constantly before the same congregation, *avoid too much sameness* in your exordium.

Such, then, being the character most suited to an exordium, namely, that it be varied, but for the most part brief, modest, conciliatory, grave, and always interesting; and not only generally interesting, but such as may incline the hearts, or the minds, of the hearers to the particular subject of your discourse;—if you desire examples, take down any volume of standard sermons from your shelf, and you will find them to be such as I have described. I may, however, briefly advert to some of the most ordinary modes.

The simplest exordium, is merely to explain the text. When there is any difficulty either in the terms or the sub-

[1] See Letter vii.

[2] See the account given (Iliad, iii. 210) of the manner of Ulysses.

[3] Archbishop Hort.

ject, an explanation *must* be given at any rate, early in your discourse, and will form a very good exordium on ordinary occasions. The connexion with the context may often be wrought into an agreeable exordium. Many texts from the Epistles, especially those connected with a controversy, are unintelligible till the circumstances are explained. Thus Tillotson, in Sermon xv. on 1 John iii. 16—"It will conduce very much to the clearing of this matter to consider briefly, the occasion of the words; and this will best be done by attending steadfastly to the main scope and design of the Epistle."

Similar to this, is an exordium made by adverting to the time or place, when and where, the words were spoken; the circumstances of the person speaking, or the person addressed; the state of parties; and other topics discussed more at large in a former letter.[1]

Another sort of exordium is to point out when there is any thing remarkable or peculiar in the text or subject.

Sometimes the literal meaning of the text may seem paradoxical, and require elucidation, as, "Take no thought what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your bodies, what ye shall put on." "What!" exclaims Bishop Horne, "take no thought! no thought at all for the morrow! Attend only to the day which is passing over us, and make no provision for the future!" Sometimes there may be a doctrinal difficulty involved in the text, or it may appear to contradict some other text; in which case your exordium may explain the difficulty or contradiction.

Sometimes it is useful, by way of exordium, to lay down the general principle according to which you propose to treat the subject.

A common, and often interesting mode of beginning a

[1] See Letter xxi.

sermon, is to weave a narrative into the exordium. Thus Blair, in vol. iv. Sermon i., "Job, in the first part of his days, was the greatest of all the men of the East; his possessions were large, his family numerous." See also Cooper, vol. iii. Sermon ii. Your narrative may be either the part of the Scripture from which the text is taken, or it may be adduced from some other part to illustrate the text. The latter causes most interest, especially if the connexion with the text be not obvious; as the curiosity of your hearers will be excited to see how you make out the connexion. Heber begins his first sermon with the following anecdote:—"There is an ancient fable, which, fable as it is, may, for its beauty and singularity, well deserve to be remembered,—that in one of the earliest persecutions to which the Christian world was exposed, seven Christian youths sought concealment in a lonely cave, and there, by God's appointment, fell into a deep and deathlike slumber. They slept, the legend runs, two hundred years."

Sometimes you will find it necessary to begin by refuting some objection, if it be very obvious; or guarding against some misunderstanding, if it be likely to occur; or by controverting some erroneous conception, which, if unremoved, would invalidate your argument; particularly one which rests on the authority of some great name. Thus Mr. Benson commences Lect. xviii. vol. ii. by controverting Stackhouse's idea of the life of Joseph being a drama.

Sometimes you may open your sermon by removing an inveterate prejudice, which stands in the way of the doctrine which you wish to establish. Sometimes from a general principle you may descend to a particular application: at other times, from a particular instance you may ascend to a general principle.

If you should be called on to address some dignified assembly,—as, for instance, the University, or a church full of

clergymen, assembled at a visitation, or to preach an Assize-sermon, it is a sign of very bad taste to prelude, as members of Parliament often do, by deprecating criticism—lamenting that so incompetent an individual has been chosen for the task,—and declaring that you are overpowered by your feelings. All this is very much out of place, even though you may really feel it. You ought to struggle against it; and fortify your sense of personal weakness by the dignity and importance of your office. Very different from this was the celebrated exordium of Brydayne when he preached before the prelates and clergy in the church of St. Sulpice, in Paris;—"At the sight of an audience so new to me," said he, "it seems, my brethren, that I ought to commence by imploring your kindness in favor of a poor missionary, destitute of all those talents, which you require in one who comes to discourse with you on the subject of your salvation. But I experience at this moment, a sensation of a very different kind; and if I feel deeply humbled, do not, I beseech you, imagine that it is with the wretched disquietude of vanity, as though I were accustomed to preach myself. God forbid that one of his ministers should think that he needs to be excused by you. For whoever you may be, you are, like myself, in the judgment of God, but miserable sinners. It is solely in the sight of your God and mine, that I feel myself at this moment compelled to smite upon my breast. Until this moment I have been accustomed to proclaim the Gospel of the Most High in lowly temples covered with thatch;—I have preached the severities of penance to unhappy beings, the greater number of whom have at the time wanted bread; I have announced the most fearful truths of religion to the simple villager. Unhappy man! What have I done? I have made sad the poor and dearest friends of the Lord, I have filled with apprehension and grief those faithful, simple souls, whom I ought rather to have con-

doled with and comforted. It is in this place—where my eye meets only the great and wealthy, the oppressors of suffering humanity, and bold and hardened offenders—ah! it is here alone, in the midst of so many scandals, that I ought to echo, with all its thunders, the divine word, and summon to me in this pulpit,—on the one hand death, and on the other, the great God, who comes to be our Judge. I hold even now your sentence in my hand. Tremble, then, before me, ye proud and scornful men! The thankless abuse of all the means of grace, the necessity of salvation, the certainty of death, the fearful uncertainty of its arrival, final impenitence, the last judgment, the small number of the elect; hell itself, and above all, eternity! eternity! these, these are the subjects, on which I am about to enter, and which I should have reserved for you alone. Ah! how I need your help! You who will condemn me, perhaps, without saving yourselves; may God touch your hearts, while his unworthy minister speaks! He surely will, for I have acquired a large experience of his mercies. He! He alone can reach the depths of your consciences. Then, struck with alarm—smitten with distress, at your iniquities, you will come and cast yourselves in the arms of his love, pouring forth tears of compunction and grief. Then, and then only, will you make me eloquent enough." This is a fine specimen of bold eloquence, though not quite suited to an English pulpit.

Lastly.—It is a disputed question, though not a very important one, whether you should compose your exordium first or last. In so short a composition as a sermon, it is of little moment which course you pursue: only, the subject ought to be well planned in your head before the exordium is written; and you should be careful, while you select some interesting point for the exordium, at the same time not to

take so much as to anticipate or impoverish the main part of your discourse.

Claude recommends the considering of the whole sermon under one point of view, condensing it into one idea, (which would serve for the title of the sermon,) and then setting forth, by way of exordium, some other idea connected with that idea. Thus Cooper, vol. i. Sermon ii.—"What fruit had ye in those things whereof you are now ashamed, for the end of those things is death." His division is,—1st, sin yields no present fruit; 2ndly, it is followed by shame; 3rdly, it ends in death. Condensed into one idea, this might be called—"*Sin shown in its true colours.*" His exordium speaks of the advantage of this exposure:—"One of the surest means by which Satan keeps men under his power, is by keeping them in ignorance of their state. Did they once see in what a *vile*, *shameful*, and *ruinous* service they were engaged," [observe these three epithets, how they correspond with the triple division,] "they would quickly leave it; did they once see what sin really was, they would speedily flee from it. In this view the text is particularly useful, for it sets *sin before us in its true colours*, and shows us what it is when stript of every covering."

Some preachers, as Tillotson and Cooper, are in the habit of making at the beginning *a formal division* of their subject, and telling you, beforehand, all that they are going to say.[1] Others object to this practice,—first, because it has too formal an air; and, secondly, because it too much anticipates the subject, and takes away from the interest. If the main object of a sermon were that it be remembered, both a formal division and a recapitulation would be indispensable. But the main object in a sermon is not, so

[1] See Tillotson in Serm. ccxi. and elsewhere.

strictly speaking, that it be *remembered*, as that it be *understood* at the time, and leave behind a *permanent impression*, —an impression, not so much of the arguments, as of the conclusion. If you can leave your point firmly and practically impressed on your hearers' minds, it is of little comparative importance whether they remember all your argument or not. However, division will often be found very useful to make a sermon understood, and, through that, to make the requisite impression. When the subject is difficult and intricate, it may be well on this account to distinguish its parts; but, when the subject is so simple as to be understood without formal division, it should be omitted as needless, and on other accounts objectionable. Yet, though you may not choose formally to divide the whole subject, it may sometimes be found desirable to divide, or to number, *a part* of your discourse. You may say, for instance— "There are two points to which I would here call your particular attention;" or you may, if you please, make a division of the main body or argument, and then proceed to something new in the application. For it is often both useful and interesting to bring out some new and striking matter for which the hearers were unprepared. I do not like a sermon divided thus—"First, I shall show you so and so; secondly, so and so: then endeavour to apply it to your hearts, or improve it to your edification." What is the use of this last announcement? This ought to come as a matter of course.

Your division should be in concise and pointed terms; and one part should lead naturally to the next. Since all division is made in order that the sermon may be understood, you will perceive that it is chiefly applicable to illiterate congregations.

Lastly, there is a distinction, though not a difference, between division of a *text* and division of *subject*. Strictly

speaking, *the subject only* should be divided. Some texts will not divide, and that on the whole is fortunate. To divide the text without reference to the subject can never lead to a good mode of treatment; but it is a mistake into which preachers continually fall. We shall, however, look more into this point in a subsequent letter.

LETTER XXV.

ON DISCUSSION—LECTURES.

NEXT to exordium comes *discussion;* in speaking of which I would, in the first place, remind you always to keep in view that the true object of all preaching is *to win souls to Christ.* It is not enough to take up half an hour in speaking agreeably on some religious subject. You should have a constant eye to the persuasion of your hearers, whether it be by instruction, argument, or exhortation. Nor should you consider how the subject may be best handled *in itself*, but how best handled with reference to this point. Every thing, in short, except truth, must give way to persuasion.

Persuasion, then, being the point in which all sermons essentially agree, it is in the mode of discussing or treating a subject with this view that they essentially differ. We shall find it convenient here to classify discourses from the pulpit upon this principle. There would seem to be an dless variety both in the conception and execution of sermons: yet they may be arranged with sufficient accuracy for our present purpose under certain definite heads. We will first make a division of all discourses into *lectures* and *sermons.* My present letter will include the former of these divisions.

By lectures, I mean the *expounding* or *explaining* of Scripture or other subjects, as the Liturgy, Creed, or Arti-

cles. But this may be done either by a mere unconnected comment, or with a view to some principal point. We must, therefore, subdivide this class into *lectures proper* and *expository discourses;* the difference between which is, that the latter require unity of subject, which the former do not. By lectures proper, I mean the simplest and rudest kind of pulpit address, like the homilies of the ancient Churches—when preaching was not so formal a business as it is at present; but the Presbyters and Bishop rose, one after another, to address a word of exhortation to the people. The lecturer commonly takes a portion of the Scripture, and, according to his ability, expounds or explains it in a continuous order; his object being to influence the minds of his hearers principally by means of Scriptural instruction. The Holy Scriptures speak in a great measure for themselves; the mere presentation to the mind of Scriptural truth possesses in itself the force of persuasion on minds fitted for the reception of it. But then, to illiterate persons, many portions of Scripture, and many Scriptural allusions and expressions, are not intelligible. "Preachers," says Fenelon, "speak every day to the people of the Scriptures, the Church, the Patriarchs, the Law, the Gospel, of Moses and Aaron, and Melchizedec, of Christ, the Prophets, the Apostles; but there is not sufficient care taken *to instruct them in the meaning* of these things, and the character of these holy persons."[1] "How can people understand that Christ is our *Passover*, if we do not teach them what the passover means?" A good deal of this work is effected in these days at Sunday-schools; still there remains much which may be done, by way of remembrance, if not strictly instruction, in lectures from the pulpit.

[1] Fénélon, Dialogues sur l'Eloquence, iii. "La véritable manière de prouver la vérité de la Religion, est de la bien expliquer. Elle se prouve elle-même, quand on en donne la vraie idée." Ib.

This mode of address does not, perhaps, afford such opportunities for elegant composition, or animated eloquence, as the preaching of regular sermons, but it requires more Scriptural knowledge, and a greater facility of bringing it forward. It admits of an infinite number of illustrations, explanations, and comparisons of texts. The warp of your work is the chapter of the Bible before you; you may weave it into any colours or patterns you have by you,—all the knowledge you possess. Lectures of this sort, though not by custom admissible as the principal discourse on the Lord's day, have, however, the authority of eminent persons for their usefulness on many occasions. "Long sermons," says Bishop Burnet, "in which points of divinity are more ably and regularly handled, are above the capacity of the people; short and plain ones upon large portions of Scripture, [*long texts and short sermons*, as Scougal calls them,] would be better hearkened to, and have a much better effect. They would make the hearers love and understand the Scriptures better." So important did Paley consider this sort of preaching, that he delivered a charge expressly upon the advantages of lectures, and particularly recommends them *after the afternoon service* in country parishes. "Lectures may be given," he says, "on the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Commandments, the Articles; but expositions of Scripture possess manifest advantages above other schemes of teaching. They supply a more extensive variety of subject; as one short chapter, or half a long one, will always be sufficient for one occasion. I am apt also to believe that admonition against any particular vice may be delivered in commenting upon a text in which such vice is reproved, with more weight and efficacy than in any other form. The Scripture will seem to lead you to it, so that it will exclude the suspicion of intentional personality, even though you speak freely and pointedly." He might, perhaps, have added,

with equal truth, that lectures of this sort afford opportunities by which the great truths also of the Gospel may be impressed on the minds of many hearers more advantageously than in any other way. In addition to this advice, he affords us the valuable authority of his own experience of the good resulting from such a mode of instruction. "The afternoon congregation, which consisted of a few aged persons in the neighbourhood of the church, seldom amounted to more than twelve or fifteen; since the time I have commenced this practice, the congregation have advanced from under twenty to above two hundred. This is a fact," he goes on to say, "worthy your observation, because I have not a doubt but every clergyman who makes a like attempt will meet with the same success, and many, I am persuaded, with much more. Any one commentary on the New Testament will supply materials for the work, and is, indeed, all the apparatus necessary for undertaking it. Grotius, Hammond, Whitby, Clarke, Doddridge, [or Girdlestone,] will any of them be found to contain what is sufficient for the present purpose. For the purpose of public expounding, a different preparation will be necessary for different persons,—and for the same person in the progress of his undertaking. One may choose at first to write down the greatest part of what he delivers; another may find it sufficient to have before him the substance of the observations he has to offer, which will gradually contract itself into heads and notes or common places; upon which he will dilate or enlarge at his discretion. In the mode also of conducting the work, room may be left for difference of choice. One may choose to expound the Second Lesson, another the Gospel of the day, another a portion of Scripture selected by himself, and to another it may appear best to begin with the Gospel, and so regularly forward; which method I have practised as most simple and connected." Perhaps, as good a plan to adopt

as any would be an *harmonical explanation of the Gospel*, admitting copiously of illustration from other parts of Scripture; and I would in general propose one main subject. Thus, if you begin the history of our Lord, let the first lecture be on *the cause of his coming into the world.* To assist your memory, if necessary, note down the heads thus:—"History of our Lord, most interesting part of the Bible. I propose (with God's permission) to lay before you a connected account from the Gospels;—those who cannot read will have the most important part of the Scripture presented to them,—those who can will have it set before them in a connected form;—I beg you to meditate at your homes on what I say, and pray God to enable you to profit. We will begin with John i. (open the Bible and read.) This shows that we are not to consider the birth of our Lord as the beginning of his existence. No, He had no beginning nor end,—He is immortal,—eternal. He was present at the creation, (read Heb. i. first part;) all this is spoken of Jesus Christ—so He was not mere man, but God—God manifest in the flesh. Secondly: Why did he come into the world?—to save man—let us inquire into this, (read Genesis i. 26; ii. 7, 8, 9, 15, description of man's original happy state; then part of Gen. iii., description of his fall and curse.) Thenceforth its nature,—bad, corrupt, and sinful. This is not only history or conjecture, but what we may see and feel;—look around,—look within, at our own hearts, how weak! how sinful! (read Romans vii. 14.) It was to save us from this state that the Son of God, though equal to his Father, came and took our nature, lived, taught, suffered, died. Recapitulate,—apply,—conclude with Rev. vii. 14, to the end." This sketch has more connexion, perhaps, than is generally needful in lectures, and belongs more properly to the next division of our subject; but I have set it down here, as being what I imagine an improvement on the common method of taking only a

chapter. It is both easier to the preacher and more instructive to the people. It requires rather more preparation, but less invention at the time of delivery.

The simple mode of exposition, of which we have been speaking, is capable of great refinement, and admits of adaptation to the most cultivated congregations. Witness Porteus's Lectures on St. Matthew's Gospel, and Robinson's and Blunt's on Scripture Characters. These, though composed in the most polished form, cannot be otherwise classed than under the present head, on account of their want of unity of subject. Indeed, they were not delivered by their respective authors, as sermons on the Lord's day, but as week-day lectures.

It should be observed that, though lectures of this description are not generally admissible as regular sermons, yet that this mode of expounding may often be advantageously employed as a part of *any* sermon, when a portion of Scripture, illustrative of the subject in hand, requires explanation.

The second division of lectures, which we have termed *expository discourses*, differs from the former in requiring unity of design, and some definite subject; whereas, the other sort admits of whatever heterogeneous materials are found together in the chapter. Under the head of expository discourses we understand those, the subject of which is some narrative of Scripture, some parable, or Scripture character taken as a whole, the argument of an epistle, the subject of a psalm, or any similar topic. Bishop Butler's sermon on Balaam is a good instance of this sort of discourse. His text is, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."[1] "If," says he, "what shall be offered to your consideration at this time, be thought a dis-

[1] Numbers xxiii. 10.

course upon the whole history of the man, rather than upon the particular words which I have read, this is of no consequence. It is sufficient if it afford reflections of use and service to ourselves." After relating the principal incidents of his history, he says, "So the object we have now before us is the most astonishing in the world. A very wicked man persisting in his wickedness, and preferring the wages of unrighteousness, even when he had before him a lively view of death. Good God! what inconsistency, what perplexity is here! To bring these observations home to ourselves, it is but too evident, that many persons allow themselves in very unjustifiable courses, who yet make great pretensions to religion." In this example we see, that though the whole history is touched on, yet it is all made to bear on one point; the rays are all concentrated into one focus; which is the essential feature of the sort of sermons now under our view. I will not say that it is absolutely necessary to make the whole portion of Scripture selected bear on *one* point; because, sometimes, *several* inferences, more or less closely connected together, may be profitably drawn from the same source without interfering with the unity of the whole. "A coherent view," says Fenelon, "of the chief facts relating to any person or transaction may be given in a concise, lively, close, pathetic manner, accompanied by such moral reflections arising from the several circumstances, as may best instruct the hearers."

Unlike the former kind of lecture, the expository discourse is well adapted to ordinary preaching before a mixed congregation. In some respects it is the best of any, especially to a country congregation, many of which are unable to read; for it brings before them in a plain manner considerable portions of Scripture. And not only is it the easiest sort of sermon to be understood, but it is also the easiest to be written. A moderate exertion of talent is suf-

ficient, because the sketch and materials are in a great measure prepared to the preacher's hand.

With regard to the *text* proper for a discourse of this sort, it will be enough to read a short sentence for form's sake, as, "Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower;" "The Lord commended the unjust steward;" "God be merciful to me a sinner!" these will serve to introduce, as the subject of your discourse, the portions of Scripture from which they are respectively taken.[1]

I shall devote the remainder of this letter to giving some cautions against *a spurious mode of expounding Scripture*, which, though it has its admirers, and is sanctioned by the authority of some of the Fathers, is deservedly censured by the most judicious theologians;—I mean the plan of drawing out the words of Scripture beyond their true and legitimate meaning, either in the way of direct and authoritative interpretation, or in the more vague and indefinite mode of arbitrary accommodation. Take the following for an instance: "Jacob found admittance to his father, and obtained his blessing by putting on the goodly raiment of his elder brother Esau. *Thus*, if *we* hope to gain the favour of our heavenly Father, and be received into his presence, we must put on the best robe, the robe of righteousness, the goodly raiment of our elder Brother: we must be clothed with his spotless covering, or we shall never know the blessing." This has been called the *ultra-evangelic* style: it is the accommodation of every possible incident to Christ and the doctrines of the Gospel. But, if you accommodate them to Christ, why may not those who choose apply them to other persons? "*God created the sun and the moon*, that is, said the Extravagants [canons] of Pope Boniface VIII. the *Pope* and the *Emperor*. '*Behold, here are two swords*,' said St.

[1] See Note E, at end, Expository Preaching.

Peter. It is enough, said Christ—enough for St. Peter. So he got the two swords, the spiritual and temporal—said the gloss on that text. Of these things there is no beginning and no end, no certain principle and no good conclusion."[1] Surely such a mode of interpretation, however piously intended, is not only unedifying, but positively mischievous. It injures the purity and credibility of Scripture, which ought to "utter a certain sound;" and it invalidates the force of what is true, by mixing up with it what is doubtful and fanciful. The proper mode of expounding Scripture is, "to give the true sense, and to ground on it only such inferences as naturally flow from it; not to find out recondite meanings, mystic allusions, and fanciful analogies." When the modesty of common sense is overstepped, we know not into what error and fallacies we may be led. It is difficult to know precisely where to draw the line between fanciful accommodation and legitimate deductions. Some of the most eminent lecturers and preachers of the present day have, I think, in some instances, deviated from the just line. Thus in the sermons of Bishop Heber (which, however, we must remember were published after his death) we find the following passage on the parable of the good Samaritan.[2] "The unfortunate plundered traveller is a representative of all mankind. They, like him, have departed from Jerusalem, the city of God—his favour, or the light of his countenance; and set their face towards the pursuits and pleasures of this world—those temptations which are represented under the name of Jericho,—a town which, as you will read in the book of Joshua, was accursed of God, and devoted to everlasting ruin. And, like this traveller, by their departure from Jerusalem, they have fallen into a val-

[1] Bishop Jeremy Taylor.

[2] The same exposition is found in Jones of Nayland, and in earlier writers.

ley of blood,—into the power of the worst of thieves, and the most cruel of murderers, the devil and his angels. And now, stripped of his raiment of righteousness, wounded to the very death, and his wounds festering in the face of heaven, man is left in the naked misery of his nature, without hope, or help, or comfort. A certain priest comes down this way; by him are signified the sacrifices offered for sin in the earlier ages of the world, the offerings of Melchizedek, Noah, and Abraham. But to help this wretched object the blood of bulls and of goats was vain; it could not cleanse his conscience, nor heal the wounds inflicted by his spiritual enemies: the sacrifice passes by on the other side. A Levite next appears, the representative of the Jewish law given by Moses, himself of the tribe of Levi; and administered in all its ceremony by the Levite family. Moses is, indeed, represented as aware of the extent of the evil and the miserable condition of mankind; he approaches, he looks on the sufferer, but will not, or cannot help him; no ceremonies, no outward forms of holiness are here of service; he passes by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan—(do you not remember how the Jews had said to Jesus, Thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil?)—a certain Samaritan, saith our Lord, (using their own language, and the insults they had thrown out against him,) as he journeyed, came where he was..... Do you not perceive, my Christian friends—do not your own hearts inform you how truly the parable resembles our blessed Saviour?.... So closely do even the smallest circumstances of this parable agree with the explanation, that the ancient doctors and fathers of the Church are of opinion, that by the two pieces of silver are represented the sacraments, which are left for the support of Christians till their good Samaritan shall return again; and which are committed to the care of the clergy, who are here represented as hosts of Christ's inn, and dispensers of his

spiritual provision and bounty." Surely there is no warrant in Scripture for any part of this interpretation. Those who indulge in accommodation should be careful, at least, to remind their hearers that it is *only* accommodation,—the offspring of their own imagination, and not the real word of God. Otherwise the hearers are imposed on by the authority of the minister, and receive, as the word of truth, the pious fancies of the preacher's brain.

If it be clearly understood that it is merely accommodation, and the different points thus drawn out are not represented as taught or proved thereby, but are confirmed by other parts of Scripture and the teaching of the Church, then indeed nothing forbids or limits this style of address but the rules of good taste and the probability of edification.[1]

[1] Since writing the above, I have read the able remarks of Mr. Newman on the use of allegory, contained in his work on the Arians, pp. 61--70. But, though agreeing with the greater part of them, I do not think it necessary to retract or qualify what has been advanced. Mr. Newman's remarks account for the allegories used by St. Paul, and apologize for those found in the writings of Origen and others of the early fathers, but are scarcely sufficient to authorize their use, even by such men as Heber, when preaching to a modern English congregation. [Let me ask attention, however, to the following thoughtful remarks of a Bishop of the American Church on this point of the exposition of Holy Scripture :]

"When God vouchsafes to communicate with man, must not the least of His communications partake of the character of Him from whom they emanate, and stamp even man's poor instrument of conveying thought from mind to mind, with the impress of infinity? Of all the fruitful brood of neologistic errors, there is none, perhaps, more subtle, certainly none more dangerous, than the utterly false assumption, that when our Maker deigns to employ the instrument which He lent us in the use of written speech, He is limited by the bounds which limit us, and subjects Himself to the restrictions under which our finite capacities and powers place us. It is not true, that a man's letter to his friend can be understood merely by once or twice

reading, after the acquisition of an adequate acquaintance with the vocabulary and grammar of the language in which it is indited. If relating to himself, his doings, and his plans, a knowledge of the writer, his character, his principles, his habits, and mode of thought, not easily attainable, nor always to be attained, must be possessed, before we can be sure we understand him. How evident the truth, that the communications of the Unsearchable MIND come under the same category! How self-evident the consequence that no human intellect can ever fathom their exhaustless depth of meaning! That no merely human skill can even penetrate its surface!

"Beware, then, of the empirical concert of rationalism, that by measuring words and syllables you may drain the fount of revelation, and by the use of grammars, lexicons, and commentaries, assure yourselves that such and such an expression in the word of God, means just thus much, and nothing more—that the surface-meaning is all you have to look for, and, once obtained, leaves no reward for further search. No such shallow conception of the value of the precious deposit committed to our keeping, and opened for our use, kept back the humble men of heart of olden time, from striving to look into the full import of every portion of its contents. History, prophecy, and precept; type, ceremonial law, and symbol; sacred song, proverb, parable, lamentation, and wise saying; all, they believed to be, and because they believed it, found them, replete with indications, rather than revelations—suggestions, rather than inculcation of high and edifying spiritual truth. It is a true, though a painful confession, that 'whole portions of Scripture, Levitical details, topographical catalogues, or Hebrew genealogies, appear to have been full of CHRIST, full of outlines of His Church, to the affectionate temper of early times, where now to us the lamps are gone out, and there are no springs of heavenly meditation flowing.'

"Beyond question, to the multitude of those who bear the name of CHRIST, this low estimate of the Written Word is doing deadly mischief. It poisons the spiritual life in its very fountains, and starves our faith, and dwindles love and obedience, by withholding the food provided for their nourishment. The unvarying experience of the Church attests, that in proportion as her children cease to look after and prize high meanings in the text of Scripture, in the same proportion they leave off striving after high attainments in divine communion and holy living; and that cold, dead orthodoxy, hollow formalism, or low-toned morality, go hand in hand with the mean and nar-

row views of the interpretation and use of Scripture, that have, from time to time, like an intermitting plague, broken out, erst at Antioch, then at Mopsuestia, after a lapse of many ages, with Laurentius Valla for a leader, in unbelieving Italy, and in their last worst shape, in Germany and England in the eighteenth century.

"It is a melancholy, but instructive exhibition of human weakness and inconsistency, that such degrading views of Holy Writ, seem ever to have prevailed, in company with a corresponding disesteem of the organization of the Church, which is its divinely constituted witness and keeper. The men who have been most prone to disparage the ministry of the successors of the Apostles, and the mysteries committed to their stewardship, in ostensible jealousy for the authority and efficacy of the Written Word, have proved themselves readiest to depress the Scriptures to the level of human compositions, to deprive them of their sacredness and divine impress, and, as far as in them lay, to empty them of their fulness of grace and consolation.

"Be it our welcome and honourable task, my brethren, to strive equally against these associated, though inconsistent errors. Holding fast to the golden chain by which we trace our possession of the means and pledges of spiritual life up to the throne of GOD, let us, with not less tenacity, retain the charter of salvation, and contend for all its pregnancy of import. Even as the ways of GOD and the thoughts of GOD are not as man's thoughts and ways; even so let us be bold to believe and teach that His words are not as man's words, but full, where mere human writings would present to these latter days only emptiness, and overflowing with the soul's best nourishment, where the critic can find nothing but a source long since drained dry.

"To this end, they must be our constant study, in a right, that is, an humble, believing, seeking spirit. Not the reading of a few verses, or chapters, or a book, in a set course, in the translation made for the unlearned, will serve our turn. As a connoisseur sets some precious work of a great master in every light, that he may seize all its beauties in their several aspects, we must vary our modes of studying the Scriptures, to provide in every way against the deterioration or diminution of their sense, by our own subjectivities of ignorance, prejudice, incapacity, inattention, and stupidity. At one time, large portions read consecutively may enable us to catch the spirit of the whole, and take in, as at a bird's-eye view, the drift: at another, sentences, and even words, may be pondered on for weeks, and revolved with unwearied industry, even to the hundredth time. An

expression, as, for example, that by which the Lord Jesus is designated as the mystic 'Corner-stone,' may be traced down from psalmist to evangelist, and back again from evangelist to prophet, and thence from prophet to apostle, till it becomes the key to the mystery, hidden from the beginning, of the wondrous fabric of the spiritual House of God. A phrase—as Bishop Sanderson has admirably shown in the case of the royal psalmist's favourite theme, the 'mercy and truth,' in which he trusted—may be dissected, until we discover within its folds the germ of the whole wonder of redeeming love.

"To such pursuits, I may, surely without irreverence, exhort you in the sacred language, 'count not yourselves to have apprehended,' but with unceasing diligence 'press forward' to obtain a nearer and a clearer insight into *all* that the Infinite Mind, which ever lives in the words of the blessed Book, designed to make attainable through their medium by created intellect."—*From Bishop Whittingham's Commencement Address*, pp. 5—7.

LETTER XXVI.

ON DISCUSSION—TEXT-SERMONS.

HAVING considered the simpler kinds of pulpit discourses under the title of lectures, we come now to the more complex. These we will divide into two great classes—*text-sermons* and *subject-sermons*. By the former we understand those which consist mainly in the discussion of a text—by the latter those of which the text is little more than a motto. In text-sermons you confine yourself, as much as possible, to the ideas which the text suggests, and take the frame-work and division of your sermon from it. In subject-sermons you derive the matter and form of your discourse from some external source, deeming it sufficient if it be fairly connected with the text. It is not easy to distinguish always very precisely between these two divisions, because many sermons partake of the nature of both; yet, as classes, they have many distinctive features.

Text-sermons are those on which Claude, and Simeon, and other writers, have laid the principal stress; indeed, almost the whole of Claude's essay is devoted to them. They were more in vogue among the French than in this country. Yet even here they constitute a large portion of the sermons ordinarily preached.

The two principal modes of discussing texts are, according to Claude, by *explication* and *observation*. Which of

the two modes you should adopt will depend on the nature of the text. Difficult texts should be discussed in the former way, easy ones in the latter. It would be absurd to set about explaining or unfolding a text which is obvious and simple, such as a mere passage of history; and equally so to remark only upon one which is intricate and difficult. Sometimes, indeed, when the matter is very weighty and important, a text, however easy, may be discussed by way of explication. Many texts, perhaps most, will contain matter for explication, as well as observation, in which case you must explain first, and make your observations afterwards.

If you require more particular rules concerning the theory of the discussion of texts, I must refer you to Claude's Essay, as published by Mr. Simeon. The observations of the latter writer are by far the most valuable part of the work. But in truth I am not sure as to the advantage of rules on this subject. M. Claude himself allows that, "as the texts of Scripture are infinite, it is impossible to give perfect rules thereupon; it depends," he says, "on good sense." I would rather trust to your good sense for the manner of discussing a given text, than recommend you to refer it to any precise rule; which would probably serve rather to cramp than assist your genius. Since, however, you would, perhaps, at first, for want of practice, be at a loss how to employ your good sense in the treatment of a text, I think you will find the following the readiest and most practical way of acquiring a due proficiency in this point: and at the same time will be adding greatly to your stock of knowledge. Make a practice every day (that is, so long as you consider yourself a student) of analyzing two or three good sermons of some standard author. Observe carefully how he has managed his text; endeavour to discover the process of thought by which he was guided; and mark well how his ideas are arranged. You may, if you please, first

take the text on which he has written, and draw up from it a scheme yourself, and afterwards see how far the writer's plan coincides with your own. This appears to me an interesting and very easy mode of accustoming yourself to the discussion of texts. You will learn the principle and the practice at once.

In the best writers there is a very great diversity as to their mode of treating texts. Some make a practice of carefully discussing every part of the text, and exercise all their ingenuity to bring in every minute particular. Others, again, seem to be carried away by their subject, and to take little care whether they stick very closely to their text or not. One of the neatest textuary preachers is Mr. Cooper; for country preaching his sermons would be admirable models of style, if there were but a little more imagination and facility of illustration: as models of handling texts they are the best I know. Read one of them cursorily, and you would think it the simplest and easiest thing in the world; analyze it, and you will find it composed according to the strictest rules of art.

Let us take the first sermon in volume ii. from 1 Thes. ii. 13, "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." At first sight you will perceive that there is a good deal of instructive matter in the text, but the way of working it all up cleverly does not so plainly appear. Let us see how Cooper has managed it. He has divided his sermon into two heads; first, "The *description* here given of the word of God—secondly, the *manner* in which it ought to be received." All that could not be reduced under these two heads—as the relation between St. Paul and the Thessalonians, his praise of them, and his thankfulness on

their behalf,—he has judiciously put into the exordium; which, it is probable, he composed after the rest of his sermon. Having disposed of these parts of the text, he goes on to his first division, *the description of the word*—first, *its author*, God, ("not the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God;") secondly, *its effects*, ("it effectually worketh in them that believe.") The next division is—*how we ought to receive it.* We ought to receive it "*as* the word of God," with *attention*, *reverence*, *teachableness*, *humility;* and *believing* it to be God's appointed instrument. Now, in this sermon, every word in the text is thoroughly discussed; nothing is introduced which is not plainly connected with it, and the whole is worked up so that strict unity is preserved.

Some preachers are fond of choosing texts even more extensive than their precise subject, with a view to have more materials to work up. There is no objection to this mode. Suppose you wished to preach on Christian courtesy; you might either take for your text the simple precept, "Be courteous;" or you might take in some of the context: "Be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; be pitiful, *be courteous;* not rendering evil for evil, nor railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are hereunto called, that ye might inherit a blessing." You might begin by eulogizing the benevolent principles of the Gospel, contained in the first part of the text; descend to your particular subject, *courtesy;* illustrate by the instances, "not rendering evil for evil, nor railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing;" conclude by the evangelical motive, "knowing that ye are hereunto called, that ye might inherit a blessing." Here the words of the Scripture which are found in connexion with the precept, "be courteous," bear upon it with sufficient importance to warrant their being used in the manner described; and certainly a sub-

ject so handled is more agreeable, and more likely to fix itself on the memory, than if the materials were drawn solely from the preacher's invention.

Text-sermons conceived and wrought in this manner are equal to any; and they have in them this great advantage, that they are built on a Scriptural foundation, and serve to impress important passages on the minds of the hearers; so that whenever they recur, the whole train of reasoning is likely to be brought back, and the impression revived. The disadvantage of this sort of sermons is, that they are difficult to manage; and, if ill managed, produce a bad effect. What can be more uninteresting and bald, than a text split up like the following by an old divine: Ephes. v. 2. "The text presents to our view seven considerable circumstances. 1st, Who? Christ. 2ndly, What? gave. 3dly, Whom? Himself. 4thly, To whom? to God. 5thly, For whom? for us. 6thly, After what manner? an offering and sacrifice. 7thly, Of what effect? of a sweet smelling savour." Here are the most important truths rendered uninteresting, not to say ludicrous. It is a grand fault to fritter away a subject by too great attention to words. "That common practice of dissecting the text into minute parts, and enlarging on them severally, is a great occasion of impertinency and roving from the chief sense."[1] "The parson's method," says Herbert, "in handling a text, consists in two parts,—first, the plain and evident declaration of the meaning of the text; and secondly, some chosen observations drawn out of the whole text, as it lies entire and unbroken in Scripture itself. This he thinks natural, and sweet, and grave; whereas, the other way of crumbling the text into small parts, as the person speaking, and spoken to, the subject and the object, and the like, hath in it neither sweet-

[1] Bishop Wilkins.

ness, nor gravity, nor variety; since the words apart are not Scripture, but a dictionary, and may be considered alike in all the Scriptures." Even without absolutely frittering and crumbling the text, a bad effect is often produced by so dividing it into heads, which are not closely connected one with the other, that the subject becomes two-fold or three-fold, instead of single.[1] Instead of discussing a text as a whole, an inexperienced preacher will divide it into distinct parts, and make each a separate vehicle for remarks, without any sufficient or interesting connexion or dependency. This is a very common error.

Another disadvantage in textual preaching is, that in the desire of keeping close to the subject, a preacher will sometimes give a jejune and uninteresting discourse, omitting highly important matter, or more convincing arguments, on the subject in hand, because his text does not suggest them.

It is, however, true that these blemishes are not essential to the sort of sermons we are discussing: they are faults rather in the execution than in the essence. In order to avoid them you must be careful in your choice of a text, and keep in view the principles which I have suggested in this and the foregoing letters, and which I may now briefly recapitulate: namely, first consider the *spirit* of the text; as, whether it be mild or severe, &c., and transfuse the same character into your sermon. Secondly, consider the *form* of the text, whether it be argumentative or didactic, &c., and endeavour to throw the discourse into something of the same shape, by explication or observation. Thirdly, consider the main point and scope in the text, and keep closely to that, having it always in your eye. Fourthly, do not clumsily divide the text according to the precise order

[1] "Il n'y a plus d'unité véritable; ce sont deux ou trois discours différens, qui ne sont unis que par une liaison arbitraire."—Fénélon, Dialogues sur l'Eloquence.

in which it stands, but select the principal points, and arrange them so that they shall have a proper connexion and dependency; that the former may naturally lead to the latter, and that they may rise one above another in interest and importance.

LETTER XXVII.

ON DISCUSSION—SUBJECT-SERMONS.

THERE is a great difference between the sermons preached by the early divines of our Protestant English Church and those of the present day.[1] Jeremy Taylor, Barrow, and others of our old preachers, when they took a subject in hand, would not leave it, until it was thoroughly exhausted. If a good hour or more one Sunday would not suffice, they would attack the same subject again the next. Hence, it came to pass, that while in their compositions there is an immense fund of elaborate and important matter,—a fund of which modern divines have most freely and profitably availed themselves,—there is, at the same time, much which to modern congregations is uninteresting and void of persuasiveness. Immensely valuable as are the writings of many of the old English Fathers, for their sound reasoning, depth of thought, fertility of invention, copiousness of illustration, and other various excellences, and much to be recommended to the young student on all these accounts, I should not hold them up as models for the structure of a sermon. Modern sermons are more on the model of those of the primitive Fathers. Instead of endeavouring

[1] See a letter by W. T. H. in the British Magazine for September, 1834.

to exhaust a subject, it is the object of modern preachers to choose out, and use, such arguments and topics as shall be most interesting and most persuasive. They look, in short, not to their subject, but to their hearers.

When, therefore, we mention *subject-sermons* as one of our principal divisions, we do not speak of that sort of sermons which we read in the books of our old Protestant divines; for these, however well adapted to the taste of the times in which they were preached, would be entirely distasteful to modern congregations; but we speak of a distinct class which at present occupies a very prominent place in the Church of England pulpit.

Subject-sermons are a class which embraces a vast variety both as to the execution and matter, agreeing only in this distinguishing characteristic—that the subject, or rather the division and materials, are not derived from the text itself, but from some extraneous source: the text is often little more than a customary form. Suppose, for instance, your text to be, "Let a man examine himself;"[1] or, "What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch;"[2] you might enter into a general discussion of all those points in which self-examination and watchfulness are needed.

It will often happen to you in the course of your ministerial duties to wish to address your parishioners on some particular subject. A Queen's letter has arrived, and you wish to set forth the object of the society to which it relates; or you have to give notice of a confirmation, and desire to explain the nature of the rite; or you think it right to address the young persons, who have been confirmed, on the duties of the situation in which they are placed; or in your intercourse with your parishioners, you have found them ignorant of some important doctrine, or deficient in

[1] 1 Cor. xi. 28. [2] Mark xiii. 37.

some important Christian duty. Now it is plain, that in all these cases, you may either choose a text, and discuss it according to the plan pointed out in the last letter, or else you may compose an address on what you wish to speak about, without reference to any particular text, and put a text, for form's sake, which shall correspond as nearly as may be with the subject. Circumstances will determine your choice between these two plans. When it is your object to preach indirectly on a subject, the text plan is the best: but when you desire to speak pointedly and directly, the best mode is not to preach with direct reference to any particular text; except, indeed, it be to take from it the tone and character of your sermon.

This sort of sermon, if well done, has more life and spirit—more the air of business and reality—than any other mode of discourse. Read any of the speeches of the Apostles recorded in the Acts—and you will find them to be of this description. There is no appearance of discussing a text; the sole aim seems to be to employ the most persuasive reasoning on a given point.[1] In speaking thus in terms of praise of this sort of sermon, I would not be understood to recommend a vague and desultory harangue. There should always be unity of design and execution, or the most impressive address will fail of effect as a whole.

On certain occasions, subject-sermons are preferable to text-sermons. But there are others in which it is indifferent which you adopt. Many good writers seem to care little about the discussion of texts, but make their divisions and arrangements quite arbitrarily. Thus, Tillotson, on Psalm cxix. 60, "I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandment." His subject is the folly and danger of irreso-

[1] It may be remarked that nothing destroys the semblance of natural address so much as a formal division. You find no divisions in Demosthenes.

lution. His division this: "I shall first consider the reason and excuses which men pretend for delaying this necessary work, and then the unreasonableness of them. Secondly, I shall add some further considerations to engage us effectually to set about this work speedily and without delay." Now, nothing of all this can be inferred or proved from the text, and yet it is sufficiently connected with it. It is not so clever as the method adopted by Cooper, which we considered in the last letter; yet it certainly enables you to write with more freedom. In analyzing sermons you will observe a great variety on single terms, as on *pride*, on *meekness*, on *the love of God*, or *of our neighbour*, on *sanctification*, on *justification*, and the like. All these you will find treated generally as subject-sermons. The preacher chooses his topics from all parts of Scripture, discusses the subject as he pleases, and keeps his own line without much reference to the text. The objection to this system of preaching is, that it is apt to lead to a vague and common-place mode of discussion; the answer to this objection is, that you may particularize as much as you please in the application: you lay down the broad principle from Scripture generally, and apply it to that class of persons who need it.

But the main branch of this class of sermons is that in which *a proposition is discussed.* If, indeed, a proposition be discussed, on reasons suggested by the text, we should refer it to the class of sermons spoken of in the last letter. But when the truth of the proposition is proved from arguments entirely extraneous, and not suggested by the text, then it is a subject-sermon. The same observations apply to a precept. Thus, if you took the fifth commandment, and enforced the precept, "Honour thy parents," by the reason given in the text, that "thy days may be long in the land,"—explaining this promise so as to refer to a Christian's hopes, as well as an Israelite's, then it would be a bad

specimen of a text-sermon. Whereas, if you enforce the precept, on the broad grounds of Scripture truth, and Christian obligation, then the sermon would be more properly called a subject-sermon.

The enforcement of a precept, and the discussing of a proposition, are closely connected; instead of saying,—"Honour thy father and thy mother," you might say, "men ought to honour their parents." In discussing a proposition, more of argument would be suitable; in enforcing a precept, more of exhortation.

Here will be a fit opportunity to insert some remarks on *the best mode of proceeding with regard to the distribution of your matter in those sermons in which a proposition is to be proved.* In the former classes, it does not so frequently happen that you wish to prove any proposition; you assume the truth of the text, and reason upon, and apply it. But, in subject-sermons, the question often turns on the proof of some point,—the demonstration of some proposition, more or less connected with or elicited from the text. Cooper's first sermon is an instance of this; his text is Matt. xvi. 26, "What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" The proposition which he elicits from this is, "That the man who for the sake of worldly happiness, however great, shall lose his own soul, makes a most foolish bargain." "This truth," he says, "I shall endeavour to explain and prove."

In this class of sermons,—which embraces many important subdivisions, as the Bampton and Boyle lectures, most University sermons, and, indeed, generally those addressed to the educated classes,—the first point to be attended to, is, *when and where is it right to enunciate your proposition?* In what part of your discourse should you distinctly say

what the proposition is, which it is your business to prove? Undoubtedly the simplest and commonest way is, first to enunciate your proposition, and then to go about to prove it. As when our Saviour "spake a parable unto his disciples to this end, that men ought always to pray and not to faint,"[1] contrary to his usual custom, he seems to have enunciated his proposition before he began his parable; or at any rate the Evangelist has recorded it for our instruction in that form. This is certainly the best way, when the proposition is not likely to encounter opposition from prejudice, or preconceived notions; as the great and acknowledged doctrines of our faith, or admitted rules of life; or if the proposition be categorically asserted in the text. But when it is a proposition obscurely involved, or only to be inferred from the text, when it is any thing new and startling, or contrary to general opinion or practice—in short, whenever it would be likely to clash with the opinion or prejudices of the hearers, then it is better to prepare their minds for its reception; to remove objections, or establish principles, or subdue the passions of the hearers: and skilfully to avail yourself of your *a priori* arguments. Many instances of this mode of enunciating propositions may be met with in St. Paul's Epistles. "I reckon," he says, "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."[2] This proposition, if enunciated abruptly, might not have met with immediate and hearty concurrence; but it is entirely deprived of its harshness by the position which it occupies in the context. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon"——Nevertheless, when you are sure of the sound

[1] Luke xviii. 1.

[2] Rom. viii. 18.

principle of your hearers, and certain of making out your case triumphantly, and proving your point beyond dispute, there is something bold and striking in declaring at once even a startling truth. Thus St. James begins his Epistle, "Brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations."

With reference to these modes of treatment, there are two forms in which your point may be stated; either in the form of a question, or of a categorical proposition. Sometimes the same point may be expressed either way; as you might either propose for your subject the question: "What must I do to be saved?" or you might enunciate as a proposition, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." The former would fall better into an argumentative, the latter into a didactic form.

The next point is *the proper time and mode of answering objections*. First, as to the time:—this may be illustrated by the practice of advocates, or indeed of any disputants. The first speaker brings forward his own arguments, and then proceeds to answer by anticipation what may be said on the other side. The second speaker answers his opponent's argument first, in order to remove the impression, and then adduces his own. So in a sermon, if notorious objections *have been* made against your doctrine, you may begin by removing them; but if you only fear they *may* be made, then you may take notice of them later—*but not last*. When you have given your proofs you will say, "In spite of all this, some, perhaps, *may* object so and so:" then answer the objection, and recapitulate; but do not leave off with the objection. If, however, the objections be small and trivial, beware of so disposing them as to give them undue prominence. I do not think that Tillotson has managed this point well in sermons clxxxviii. clxxxix. cxc. They are on the life of Jesus Christ considered as an example. In the

last of these he has brought forward certain objections, which, though satisfactorily answered, yet, from the space they occupy, certainly present an imposing front. The first is, "that a great part of our Saviour's life consists in miraculous actions, wherein we *cannot* imitate him." Next, "that he has left us no example of the conduct of a father or husband." Thirdly, "that some particulars of our Saviour's carriage to rulers and magistrates seem liable to objection." And, fourthly, "that our Saviour did not bear himself with that duty and respect towards his mother which that relation seems to require." Instead of bringing forward all these objections in a body, it appears to me that the best way would be to have refuted the first, which is an objection of principle, early in the discussion; to have taken no notice of the second; and, if it were thought necessary to allude to the other two, to have done so when considering that particular part of his example which refers to them. Neither, by the way, do I think that the answer given to the fourth objection, however clever, is correct. He admits that Jesus did certainly "behave in a manner so strange that we cannot imagine but there must be some special and extraordinary reason for it, and we, who have lived to see and know what has happened in the Christian world, are now able to give a better account of this caution and reservedness in his behaviour towards her,—namely, that out of his infinite wisdom and foresight, he so demeaned himself towards her that he might lay no temptation before men, nor give the least occasion to the idolizing of her." I am not sure whether this objection was noticed at all with any other view than to aim a blow at the Roman Catholics. At any rate it was not prudent to admit an objection which could be easily disproved altogether. It may surely be shown that the very few instances in which the mother of Jesus is mentioned afford no proof of want of respect towards her.

Unless objections are obvious and plausible, I do not see

the necessity of even alluding to them. "It is good to raise up no more spirits, by showing the arguments of your adversary, than may be conjured down again." Whenever you do allude to them, however, take care that you give the answer speedily, and in as full and plain terms as the objection. If you have several answers to give, you may state them all, briefly, before you enlarge on any one of them,—so important is it, when an objection has been brought forward, that the hearers should, without delay, be put in possession of what may be said in refutation. You may sometimes, without paradox, refute objections *without* alluding to them. Suppose you wished to remove the idea that Job was an imaginary person, you need not even indirectly speak of it, but simply take an early occasion of quoting Ezekiel xiv. 14, in which he is ranked with Noah and Daniel. Most objections may be best met in this indirect manner.

When, however, there are objections plainly before you, and it is necessary to remove them, there are two ways of doing so;—*either to overwhelm them with contrary arguments, or to show their absurdity.* Thus when our Saviour was accused of being leagued with Beelzebub, he might either have refuted the calumny by the overwhelming evidence of his God-like attributes, or else adopt the course which he did, of showing the absurdity of the supposition,—"Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth. If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say I cast out devils through Beelzebub."

With regard to the arrangement of your arguments, you should, as a general rule, begin with the most obvious and end with the strongest. "Put that last on which you choose the strength of your case to rest." The last reason which you give is commonly that which will tell most, and fix itself most strongly on the memory.

Lastly.—Should your subject expand under your hand,

and become too long for one sermon, you may make it into two or three; but still endeavour to give to each an unity of design. Do not, as Tillotson has done in sermons clxii. clxiii. clxiv. clxv., write enough for four sermons, and then divide it into so many discourses of equal length, just as it happens, without any regard to the argument. Each sermon ought to be complete in itself. It is often better, however, to check yourself, and not suffer your subject to expand. The text "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord," would easily make two sermons; but they would want the striking contrast which the text itself presents, and which would be preserved in a single discourse.

LETTER XXVIII.

ON APPLICATION.

An essential part of every good sermon is *application*. Persuasion is the preacher's object; how can this be effected without individual application? "A sermon without application is as if a physician were to give his patient a lecture on the advantages of health, and forget to write a prescription." "Application is the life and soul of a sermon."[1] There are, indeed, subjects of so edifying and instructive a nature that the application of them may be left to the hearers.[2] Thus, when our Saviour had related the story of the good Samaritan, He contented himself with the simple appeal, "Go and do thou likewise;" and on another occasion He set a little child in the midst of his disciples, and said, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven."[3] Sometimes, after an animated description of a particular virtue or vice, a word of counsel like this may be sufficient. But it is not safe in general to trust to it; the generality of men are slow to take hints of this sort; something far more stirring is

[1] Bishop Wilkins.

[2] "Fortasse rebus ipsis cognitis ita movebuntur, ut eos non opus sit majoribus eloquentiæ viribus jam movere."—Augustini Opera; de Doct. Christ. lib. iv. cap. xiv.

[3] Matt. xviii. 3.

needed. Application ought in general to be so searching and pointed, that there can be no fear of every hearer knowing and feeling how far it relates to himself.

Application does not always appear in the same form: it is sometimes in the shape of observation or reflection; sometimes given as an inference; sometimes, perhaps generally, as an appeal, or spirited address. Sometimes it takes the form of exclamation,—"O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness." Sometimes it is a prayer, —"May God grant us his grace, that we may both perceive and know what things we ought to do." There are some writers of so scholastic and argumentative a turn, that they instinctively reason, even when they ought to address the heart; but this is unquestionably a fault.

There are two principal modes of application. The first is *continuous* application; that is, to apply each part of the discourse as you proceed. This is most properly used when each division of the sermon is, in some degree, distinct and practical; as in Cooper's third sermon, on Romans vii. 21, to which we have before alluded, the divisions are, first, sin brings no present fruit; secondly, it is followed by shame; thirdly, it ends in death. Here it is obvious that each division is capable of close and useful application, and that such distinct application is more proper than to defer it till the end. So also when your sermon is on the history, or character, of some individual, it is proper to apply as you go on; for, by that plan, the progress of the character through its different phases is more profitably marked. The same sort of application is suitable to descriptions of a virtue or vice, and to all expository sermons; and it is generally most calculated to impress the minds of illiterate hearers;—you do not suffer them to forget what you have said, but strike while the iron is hot.

The second mode, which may be called *summary* appli-

cation, is to condense the whole together towards the conclusion. In sermons consisting of one continuous argument, each branch of which is incomplete until the whole is finished, this last mode of application is necessary: for if inserted sooner it would only interrupt the explication. Nevertheless, even in this case, if opportunity offers, you may with good effect relieve the argument here and there by some short appeal to the conscience; but it is evident that the principal application cannot come till the argument is concluded.

Some sermons are all application. Suppose the text, "Thus saith the Lord, consider your ways." The terms of the text are perfectly easy; no argument is necessary; nothing you could say in proof of the necessity of consideration could add to the force of the command, "Thus saith the Lord;" therefore the whole of your sermon will consist in the application of the text to the circumstances of your hearers. A sermon of this sort must be spirited, and forcible, or it will not succeed, for it will be necessary to keep up a continued excitement: there is no opportunity for repose.

Of all parts of a sermon, application is the most difficult to a beginner, owing to his want of knowledge of the world. He may speak well and forcibly on his main subject; he may argue closely on any point, unfold a doctrine, or declare a precept in an impressive manner; but when he comes to the application, he will be at a loss how to anatomize the human heart,—how to classify his hearers' maladies, and prescribe for each case. The study of the Scriptures will help him,—for human nature is the same now as when they were delivered; the study of his own heart will give him a clew to that of others: still it is impossible that he should know much of the hearts of men. This sort of knowledge requires much thought and experience, and will

be best derived from intercourse with those whom he has to instruct. It is from what he sees in them, and learns from them in sickness and health, and amidst their joys and sorrows, and ordinary occupations, that he will obtain a practical knowledge of the intricacy and deceitfulness of the human heart, the subterfuges of sin, the wiles of Satan, the doubts and misgivings, and struggles even of good Christians.

Let any minister of ten years' standing read over some of his earlier sermons, and he will discover the truth of what I have remarked,—that when he composed them he possessed but a scanty knowledge of the human heart. He will find that he has gained a fund of experience and power of application, since they were composed. He will learn that open vice, against which he used to inveigh, requires much less frequency of assault, than secret sin; that fair pretences are not to be trusted; nor knowledge, even of the simplest truths, assumed. He will find that many doctrines, at which once he almost shuddered, are not so unscriptural as he then imagined; that he learned the character of many, from their enemies rather than themselves; and that he often attacked a phantom which had no existence, while the real enemy escaped his notice. He will become aware that all men, even those whom he most admired, are prejudiced; and that those whom he learnt to suspect and condemn are in reality, perhaps, as sincere and well-informed as himself. In short, if he be not very deficient in observation, he will find that his sermons admit of a much more extensive and searching application, nay, often a very different one from what he at first imagined.

In order to make your application, remember that the Gospel presupposes a charge of guilt; which it is your business to detect, and fasten on the conscience. You have to make your message bear on whatever of unsubdued sin

there may be in the practice of your congregation. You must carefully scrutinize and distinguish their real character. Are they fair, respectable men, but lukewarm Christians? are they hardened, hypocritical, Pharisaical? or are they "almost Christians," procrastinators,—cold, careless, indolent, sleepy Christians? are they persons who do what they ought not to do, or, rather, such as leave undone what ought to be done? Do they come under any of the heads specified in the parable of the sower,—men of pleasure, or business, or the world? Or, lastly, is your seed likely to fall on good ground? are they eager for instruction, honest, sincere? And remember, that even amongst this latter class there is a vast variety of shades,—different degrees of strength and weakness, advancement or retrogression. Those who have only lately left the paths of sin, are still, perhaps, hankering after their old habits; those who have long been pressing forward are liable to presumption and spiritual pride.

Take especial care of one thing,—that you do not so manage, or, rather, mismanage, as to let your hearers apply what you say (as they are very apt to do) to their neighbours instead of themselves. To avoid this you may, in many instances, apply it to all, "May we *all* learn so and so; may we *all* be enabled by God's grace to root out this sin from our hearts." "We must *all*, I fear, feel how applicable this is to ourselves." If you have been describing a very bad character, which no one would take to himself, you may say, "Perhaps none of us may think that this character is our own! God forbid it should be so: still, must we not feel a nearer resemblance in some points than we could wish?" Thus you should endeavour to make your hearers feel that what you bring forward is more or less applicable to every one of them. When the preacher says, "I have a message unto thee," they should not ask, "Unto which of all us:"

but it should be so said that each one should take what is meant for himself. "If," says Mr. Melvill, "Satan ever trembles for his ascendency, it is when the preacher has riveted the attention of the unconverted individual, and after describing and denouncing the covetous, or pouring out the torrent of his speech on an exhibition of the voluptuary, or exposing the madness and misery of the proud, comes down on that individual with the startling announcement, 'Thou art the man.'"

All your hearers ought to feel themselves addressed, and the subject applied to their own hearts. But this, of course, cannot be done, except in detail. "Do not," says Bishop Jeremy Taylor, "spend your sermons in general and indefinite things, as in exhortation to the people to *get Christ*, to *be united to Christ*, and things of the like unlimited signification; but tell them, in every duty, what are the measures, what circumstances, what instruments, and what is the particular minute bearing of every general advice. For generals not explicated do fill the people's heads with empty notions, and their mouths with perpetual unintelligible talk; but their hearts remain empty, and themselves are not edified." In this part of your sermon, especially, you should be like St. Paul, "all things to all men." You should address yourself in a suitable strain to the strong and feeble, the mistaken and wilful, learned and unlearned, babes and adults, with meekness, vehemence, tenderness, sharpness, reproof, expostulation. Some should be won by mildness, others saved by fear. You may also take occasion to particularize, by addressing people of different stations and occupations,—considering well the leading characteristics of each. "A mercantile audience is likely to be proud of wealth, and swayed by interest; an aristocratical by pleasure and ambition; a learned by arrogance and speculation;

a poor congregation by low immoralities, as drunkenness and swearing." Nor must you forget the *good* qualities of the respective classes; the poor are more humble and teachable, the rich more open to reason, and better able to appreciate argument. So, again, with regard to difference of age,—there are many tempers and dispositions, and modes of thinking and feeling, which you should carefully discriminate in the application of your subject. In short, there is scarcely any peculiarity of circumstance to which the doctrines of the Gospel may not be expressly applied: and this, if properly managed, without in the least descending from the gravity and dignity of preaching. "It may look to some," says Dr. Chalmers, "a degradation of the pulpit when the household servant is told to make her firm stand against the temptation of open doors and secret opportunities, or when the confidential agent is told to resist the slightest inclination to any unseen freedom with the property of his employer, or any undiscoverable excess in the charges of his management; or when the receiver of a humble payment is told that the tribute which is due on every written acknowledgement ought faithfully to be met, and not fictitiously evaded. This is not robbing religion of its sacredness, but spreading its sacredness over the face of society. It is evangelizing human life by impregnating its minutest transactions with the spirit of the Gospel." "To him that is gifted with a true discernment of these matters, will it appear, that often, in proportion to the smallness of the doings, is the sacredness of the principle which causes them to be done with integrity; that honesty in little transactions bears upon it more of the aspect of holiness than honesty in great ones; and that thus in the faithfulness of the household maid, or of the apprentice boy, there may be the presence of a truer principle than there is in the more

conspicuous transactions of human business; what they do being done not with eye-service—what they do being done unto the Lord."[1]

One caution let me here suggest. "In the reproof of sin," says Bishop Jeremy Taylor, "be as particular as you please, and spare no man's sin, but *meddle with no man's person:* neither name any man, nor signify him, nor make him to be suspected. He that doeth otherwise maketh his sermon a libel, and the ministry of repentance an instrument of revenge, and in so doing he shall exasperate the man, but never amend the sinner."[2] Even with the most perfect freedom from ill-will, and most genuine Christian feeling, still it is misplaced to make personal allusions. How ill it sounds in a sermon to speak thus—"A second remark which I would make with all due reverence, and yet in all faithfulness, is this:—Confess, I entreat you, *my Lord Mayor*, confess your Saviour manfully before men, and do him all honour both in your own family and in that high and honourable station in which his Providence has placed you. If, at the civic feast, or in the civic senate, any blasphemer (which God forbid) should dare to open his lips to impugn the Christian faith, or to deny the government of God, then, then I beseech *your Lordship*, as chief magistrate of the first Christian city in the world, stand forth, even at the risk of opprobrium and insult, to confess your Saviour's name." In spite of the earnestness and Christian temper of this passage, still it approaches very near the borders of the ridiculous.

It is not easy to keep the just medium in application. One frequent fault into which preachers fall, in their anxiety to avoid personality, is to speak in such a manner that their

[1] Chalmers's Sermons.

[2] Bishop Taylor's Advice to his Clergy.

congregation shall think they are alluding to other persons, and not to them. Nay, some preachers do intentionally speak of other persons, and edify their congregation with tirades against Papists and Dissenters, Infidels and Heretics. This is very different from the model which our Saviour and his Apostles have left us. We do not find our Saviour dilating before the Sadducees on the pride and formality of their Pharisaic brethren, nor amusing the latter with arguments against the errors of their rival sect. Nor do we observe the Apostles addressing Jews on the ignorance of the Gentiles, nor Gentiles on the pride and obstinacy of the Jews. What is the use before your village congregation of inveighing against luxury and effeminacy? You might just as well preach against stealing, as some one did, at court. "Every minister," says Bishop Taylor, "in reproofs of sin and sinners ought to concern himself in the faults of those that are present, but not the absent." Nevertheless, you may sometimes speak, as if applicable to the poor and ignorant, things very serviceable to others. In lecturing or catechizing your Sunday-school, you may convey very wholesome lessons to older persons who may be listening.

There is another very common fault, which is to make the application rather a corollary or inference from the subject than a conclusion; to make the discussion of the subject every thing, the application merely a secondary consideration. By far the better plan is to let your mind dwell on the application, or practical part, and treat the subject with a constant view to that. Such is universally the spirit of the Holy Word: the theoretical part is everywhere subservient to the practical.

The last point to be mentioned is not an unimportant one. As subsidiary to your application it will often be well to give *directions* or *instructions*. That is to say, if you have been speaking of any sin, and have brought it home to your

hearers, you should then tell them *the means* to avoid it; or, if you have filled them with love and desire of any Christian grace, you should instruct them how to attain it. This will introduce a number of topics connected with watchfulness and prayer; such as to avoid evil company, to check evil thoughts, guard against evil habits, to bow to the will of God, to seek him humbly and earnestly. A few words of well-timed advice left on your hearers' minds are often the most useful part of the sermon.

The following is an instance in which this topic is most admirably enlarged on—"Christ says, 'Watch and pray.' Herein lies your cure. To watch and to pray are surely in your power, and by these means we are certain of getting strength. You feel your weakness—you fear to be overcome by temptation. Then keep out of the way of it—this is watching; avoid society which is likely to mislead you; flee from the very shadow of evil—you cannot be too careful: better be a little too strict, than a little too easy—it is the safer side. Abstain from reading books which are dangerous to you. Turn from bad thoughts when they arise, set about some business, begin conversing with some friend, or say to yourself the Lord's Prayer with seriousness and reverence. When you are urged by temptation, whether it be the threats of the world, false shame, self-interest, provoking conduct on the part of another, or the world's sinful pleasures; urged to be cowardly, or covetous, or angry, or sensual—shut your eyes, and think on Christ's precious blood-shedding. Do not dare to say you cannot help sinning. A little attention to these points will go far, through God's grace, to keep you in the right way. And, again, *pray* as well as watch." There is a good deal more of excellent matter to the same effect.[1]

[1] See Newman's Sermons. Serm. iii. vol. i. p 42.

LETTER XXIX.

ON THE CONCLUSION.

Some preachers throw all their strength into the discussion, or principal part of the sermon; and as they have dispensed with an exordium, so they lay little stress on the conclusion; but end when the subject is finished, as it may happen. You will not find the mode satisfactory, either as a hearer or a preacher—for, as a bad exordium spoils the reception of a sermon, so a bad conclusion ruins its effect.

The object which you should have in view in your conclusion, is, to *leave on the minds of your hearers a vivid impression of the particular matter of your discourse*—not a mere intellectual perception of its sense and meaning, but a consentaneous feeling of its moral import. Whatever may be the subject of your discourse, you should make a last vigorous effort in the conclusion to stir up, or raise to the utmost, a corresponding tone of feeling, whether it be of love, gratitude, zeal, courage, faith, hope, and charity; or of sorrow, shame, self-condemnation, resolution to amend, repentance. Your language and manner must be suited to the feelings you wish to produce—entreating, expostulating, encouraging, consoling, directing, elevating; tender, or compassionate, and sometimes severe, indignant, or even threatening, in accordance with the train of feeling to which your discourse has led you. Hence your conclusion should not

be vague and general, but closely connected with the subject of the sermon. Bad preachers fall into the error of getting gradually away from the matter in hand, and falling towards the end into vague generalities, so that their conclusion would do as well for one sermon as another. It may be an earnest appeal, perhaps, on Christian faith or duty, yet lose half its effect, by deriving no weight from the previous discussion. A good conclusion should be directly and forcibly deduced from the particular subject of which you have been treating.

The first mode of conclusion which I shall notice is *application*, of which we have already spoken. Many preachers end with this. But, perhaps, generally something should follow—something to clench the nail when it is driven home—lest your hearers should go away, and straightway forget what manner of men they are—the discourse having taken hold upon them.

Another good mode of concluding is by peroration, or recapitulation of the principal arguments or topics. This may be done in the form of exhortation, if you please, or in any other form. And, in recapitulating, observe that a reverse order should be adopted from that in which your arguments were brought forward. You began with the most prominent and obvious, and should leave off with the same.[1] This mode of conclusion, by recapitulation, has the sanction of Episcopal authority. Bishop Bonner says, in his Injunction to the Clergy,—"When the preacher hath done all that he will say and utter for that time, he shall then, in a few words, recite again the pith and effect of his whole sermon, and shall add thereto as he shall think good." In truth, though I have set down recapitulation as a mode of conclusion, it will generally be desirable, as Bonner says, to "add thereto" something besides.

[1] See Whately's Rhetoric. Part i. ch. iii. § 7.

It is not necessary always to recapitulate the whole argument; but is sometimes enough to conclude with a re-statement of the strong points which you have been proving—"Let me beseech you, my beloved brethren, to keep this important point impressed on your hearts to the last day of your lives." "The time warns me," "to pause and close all finally with one solemn exhortation." "Christian brethren," "a word of serious and close application to the conscience shall now close this discourse." "Let us," says the author of Ecclesiastes, "hear the conclusion of the whole matter—fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil."

Instead of leaving your conclusion to chance—using up all your materials, and then having to look about for something to finish with—it is a good plan to forecast what your conclusion shall be, and to hoard up some striking and impressive idea. Nothing is better than *a forcible and apposite text*, containing a summary of what you have been delivering, or bearing very closely upon it. "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"[1] Such a text as this, if it be well connected with the subject, cannot fail to leave a serious impression. Thus Bishop Butler, on the text—"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his,"[2] concludes —"Keep innocency, and take heed to the thing that is right; for this shall bring a man peace *at the last*." If you have been preaching in harvest-time, you may conclude, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; and he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life ever

[1] Mark viii. 36. [2] Numbers xxiii. 10.

lasting."[1] By the way, do not, like some preachers, let all your sermons end with "life everlasting," but aim at variety.

Take care to have your conclusion in keeping with the rest, and including some of the leading ideas of the sermon; as Bishop Heber ends a sermon on the shipwreck of St. Paul—"When we are tossed by the storms which our own rashness has incurred, He is near at hand, like the Apostle, to support and strengthen us. If we follow his direction, He gives us the means and assurance of safety—and his mighty intercession can rescue his miserable creatures from a gulf of destruction more dreadful than that deep which yawned beneath the Cretan mariners." The ideas are common enough, but come in well from their appositeness.

Some preachers are fond of ending with the text with which they began. In subject-sermons, when the text has not been discussed, it may be well to revert to it again at the end, to show you have not wandered from it; but when the text has been often alluded to, or regularly discussed, it is better to seek another.

Others think it impressive to end with a prayer; "Father of mercies," says Mr. Benson, "save us from this woe, and teach us ever to speak and to write such things only as may be pleasing in thy sight, and profitable to thy people. Great Lord of life and light, and thou eternal Spirit" .... This mode of conclusion is very good, if effectively wrought and delivered, but it is liable to difficulties. In the first place, the pulpit is not a convenient situation for praying, with the congregation all looking you in the face; and in the next, they are at a loss whether to kneel or sit. You may avoid this inconvenience by adopting a form almost as impressive, and, I think, more suitable to the delivery of most

[1] Gal. vi. 7, 8.

preachers. Instead of addressing God, and saying—"Grant us thy grace, O God," you may continue to address the people in a strain of benediction—"May God grant us his grace," or, "May the grace of God assist us." If, however, both the congregation and the preacher are strongly moved, then a direct address to God is impressive and affecting; and, in order to remedy the inconvenience before alluded to, you may commence your prayer by the words, "Let us pray."

You should endeavour to *end with spirit*, and in such a manner as to recall and fix the attention of any who may have become listless. And you should so manage that your congregation shall be aware when you are going to conclude. It is not well to wind up your subject, and then, when your congregation think you have finished, to start off again on some new tack; for this reason, if your sermon is not long enough, do not add to the end of it, but rather insert new matter in the middle. Nor is it good to end so abruptly that they shall say,—"We did not know he was going to leave off."[1] It should be seen by your matter and manner that you are coming to a close; or you may say plainly,—"Let me now conclude in the words of ——."

With regard to the *manner* of your conclusion, it should more frequently be affectionate and encouraging than otherwise; sometimes admonitory and solemn; but rarely, and only on particular occasions, severe and menacing. For, if too painful an impression is left, there is danger lest the mind, distressed and alarmed, should cast from it the uneasy thoughts which have been suggested, or resort to the last expedient, even unbelief. A hope of mercy should be held out even to the worst of sinners. Besides,—as we observed, when treating of the passions,—fear, remorse, excessive grief, and the like, are apt to deaden the heart, and indispose

[1] Whately.

it to action; whereas gratitude, emulation, hope, and love, make the soul buoyant and aspiring; and are much more likely to lead to those practical results which it must always be the preacher's object to effect.

The *language* of your conclusion need not be so careful and measured as that of your exordium. It is to be hoped that your hearers will have become interested in the subject, and not be disposed to criticise the language; and you will yourself be too earnest to be fastidious about your expressions. When you conclude, as you generally should, with a warm, and somewhat impassioned appeal, let your language be brief and energetic, even approaching to abruptness. "What are we?" says Dwight, "worms! When born? yesterday! What do we know? nothing!" This is *too* abrupt, and, I should think, must have appeared affected. The following conclusion of Cooper's third sermon, vol. ii., is as good a one, for a plain discourse, as I can find. His text is, "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." He concludes in the style of the text, "Let me then, as a worker together with God, beseech you, brethren, by the riches of Divine mercy, by the love of Christ, by the value of your never-dying souls, by the hope of glory, by the weeping and gnashing of teeth, which await the slothful and wicked servant, 'that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.' Use the means,—embrace the opportunity,—improve the privileges so freely, so graciously bestowed upon you. Let not the Lord spread out his hands all day unto a rebellious people; let him not say of you, 'I called, but they refused; I stretched out my hand, but no man regarded.' Close with his offers. Accept his grace. Yield yourselves to him as willing servants. Delay not to do it. Take notice of the words which follow the text.[1] 'Behold, now is the appointed

[1] This direct reference to the context rather spoils the effect—he ought to have been thinking only of his hearers.

time: behold, now is the day of salvation.' May this be the appointed time; may this be the day of salvation to us, for his mercy's sake in Jesus Christ."

Most preachers end uniformly with a simple doxology; but I am of opinion that when your subject is brought to a serious, rather than a triumphant conclusion, it would be occasionally more impressive to end with a solemn and appropriate prayer.

Some are fond of working up with the doxology the leading ideas of the discourse,—a mode of conclusion which, if well contrived and delivered, is calculated to leave a forcible impression. Thus Bishop Heber concludes his fourth sermon, vol. i., which is on the existence of spirits: "To Him—the seed of the woman, and bruiser of the serpent's head—to Him, from the inhabitants of every world, and element, and sun, and star—from all that dwell on the earth, above and under it, be ascribed, as is most due, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, all might, and all honour, glory, and dominion, now and for ever."

PART IV.

ON DELIVERY.

LETTER XXX.

MANAGEMENT OF THE VOICE.

It only remains now that we treat of *the proper method of delivery*,—a subject, however, by no means of secondary importance. "Actio," says Cicero, (by which he means the voice, the gesture, and expression of countenance; in one word, *delivery*,) "Actio, inquam, in dicendo una dominatur. Sine hâc summus orator esse in numero nullo potest, mediocris hâc instructus summos sæpe superare. Huic primas dedisse Demosthenes dicitur, cum rogaretur quid in dicendo esset primum, huic secundas, huic tertias."[1] Aristotle speaks to the same effect in the beginning of his third book; and Quinctilian in his eleventh. "Neque enim tam refert qualia sint quæ intra nosmet ipsos composuimus, quam quomodo efferantur; *nam ita ut quisque audit, movetur.*" To come to later, and more appropriate authorities. "I am verily persuaded," says Bishop Sprat, in his discourse to his clergy,

[1] Cicero de Oratore, iii. 56, 57.

" that the sermons preached every Sunday in this one kingdom by the Church of England clergy in this age are more excellent compositions, of that kind, than have been delivered in the same space of time throughout the whole Christian world besides. Only let me take the freedom to suggest, that, perhaps, it would add much, though not to the solid and substantial parts of such discourses, yet to their just popularity and more general acceptance, and to the greater edification of our hearers, if we would universally addict ourselves a little more to this study of pronunciation; by which advantages alone, of the freedom and life of their elocution, we know the preachers of some other nations do seem to reign and triumph in the pulpit, whilst their sermons, as far as we can judge of those we have of them in print, are not comparable to the English."

The first point to which a preacher must attend when he gets into the pulpit is, *that he may be heard;*—that the sound of his voice may be heard distinctly in every part of the church.

I should not have thought it necessary to notice so obvious a truth, but for the very common neglect, or forgetfulness, amongst preachers in this most essential point. How constant a complaint is it with a congregation that they cannot hear their minister:—with all their attention, they cannot catch more than half his meaning! The better the sermon the more disappointing must it be to hear only a part of it. Now, except in very large or ill-constructed churches, this difficulty of being heard does not commonly arise from any natural or insuperable defect in the preacher's voice, but from a bad habit of delivery, contracted generally when the preacher first entered upon his office, or since fallen into from indolence or inadvertence. You will find the following hints useful to guard you against similar errors. Perhaps some of them may appear trivial; but I consider nothing as trivial

which improves the effect of preaching; and no suggestions ought to be neglected which may help to remove even the slightest drawback. "The country parson," says Herbert, "holds the rule, that nothing is little in God's service."

First, take care to speak plainly;—I do not mean loudly, but *plainly*. "Some preachers seem to think that they shall be heard if they bellow as loud as they can; and so they are, but they are not understood." It is not so much loudness of sound as distinctness of utterance which renders the voice intelligibly audible. In a church, as well as in a room, it is very possible to be too loud. Some writers recommend that particular care should be used to pronounce the consonants; others insist on the necessity of attention to the due pronunciation of the vowels. I would say rather, *attend to both*. Let every syllable of every word be properly and clearly pronounced. Do not cut short some words and almost drop others, or confuse them together, as some readers are apt to do; but give each word, even the smallest, its due pronunciation. A little attention to this point when first you begin officiating will prevent you from contracting a habit which often spoils a preacher's delivery for life. Only take care that you do not run into the contrary extreme, and acquire a pedantic preciseness of expression, which is, perhaps, as disagreeable, though not so essentially bad, as the former fault.

Be careful, in particular, not to allow your voice to sink into an inaudible tone at the end of a sentence. Keep it well sustained throughout; so that the last part of each sentence may be heard as distinctly as the first. But in so doing, avoid a practice which I have remarked in declamatory speakers, of raising the voice at the last syllable, or last but one, with a jerk, as if they were asking an impertinent question. It is difficult to explain more accurately what I mean; but, if you have ever been at a debating soci-

ety of young orators, you will, probably, have observed the trick to which I allude. Few habits have a worse effect in the pulpit, or give more the air of affectation.

Do not bend your head constantly down to your book, but keep your face towards those whom you address, in such a manner that your voice may not be lost in any part of the Church. I do not advise you to stand without motion, looking always in the same direction. But I cannot say that I admire the manner in which some preachers turn and twist themselves to all parts of the pulpit; sometimes speaking to those on the extreme right, sometimes to those on the extreme left; as if they were different parties who required different arguments addressed to each. If you have a weak voice, it is clear that, by this mode of speaking, much of what you say must of necessity be lost by those on whom your back is turned. Sometimes, indeed, when the preacher is enunciating the proposed division of his subject, or some other point to which he desires particular attention to be paid, I have observed that this object is gained by repeating it twice, as the text is usually repeated, to the right and to the left; and the same may be done when you repeat the same sentiment in different language.

If a preacher's voice is naturally weak, it is a good plan to address himself in the higher notes of his voice as distinctly as he can, to the part of the congregation farthest from him; a method, which is found to have the effect of throwing out the sound without any unpleasant exertion or straining.

In order to speak distinctly it is necessary to write distinctly. "Let me entreat you," says Dean Swift, "to add one half crown a year to the article of paper, to transcribe your sermons in as large and plain a manner as you can, and either make no interlineation, or change the whole leaf;

for we your hearers would rather you should be less correct, than perpetually stammering, which I take to be one of the worst solecisms in rhetoric. And, lastly, read your sermon once or twice a day for a few days before you preach it. To which you will probably answer, that it was but just finished when the last bell rang to Church, which I shall readily believe, but not the more excuse you." The following advice of Quinctilian is not to be despised. "Relinquendæ autem vacuæ tabellæ in quibus libera adjiciendi sit excursio. Nam interim pigritiam emendandi angustiæ faciunt, aut certè novorum interpositione priora confundunt."[1]

Besides the proper management of your own voice, it is obviously important, in order that you may be distinctly heard, to keep your congregation quiet. If their attention flags towards the middle or end of the sermon, I have observed that a few words of weighty import in a loud animated tone will make them still again. "We are told that St. Jerome, when his auditory began to grow dull in their attention, would recite a verse or two out of the Hebrew text, whereat they all started and gave ear to him." St. Augustin, too, had a peculiar plan in order to keep up attention—namely, to require the hearers to repeat the quotations after him. Thus when he said, "The end of the commandment is"—the people went on, "charity out of a pure heart and of a good conscience and faith unfeigned."[2] I do not advise you to follow these plans to the letter, but in spirit you may do so by introducing such observations as will rouse your hearers. When our Saviour desired particular attention, he would use these emphatic words, "Verily, verily, I say unto you;" or "he that hath ears to hear, let him hear." A paraphrase of these expressions may suit your purpose; you may relieve a long argument, by an appeal in the midst of it; "I should not detain you, brethren,

[1] Lib. x. cap. iii. [2] 1 Tim. i. 5. See Bingham, i. 712.

so long on this point, but that I consider it of the very greatest importance;" "I miss my aim," says Dean Milner, "if I do not make myself rightly understood;" "We would pause yet a moment," says Mr. Melvill, "on this truth, for it is worth your closest attention;" "Let this be noted," says Walker, "as a most certain yet tremendous truth;" "Permit me here solemnly to address such and such a class." But when you thus particularly invite the attention of your hearers, take care not to disappoint them, but tell them something really worth hearing.[1]

Independently of loudness or lowness of voice, proper *emphasis* is necessary to fix the attention of your hearers.

Emphasis is as essential to every sentence as accent is to every word. It is merely the distinction which a good reader or speaker naturally makes between the most important and the least important words, whether for the sake of expressing more forcibly the prominent idea, or merely to mark the sense. Observe, however, that each sentence must be pronounced with a reference to the sentences which precede and follow, not considered solely by itself; and it will be seen that words which are the most important in a sentence, when viewed separately, are often not so, when you look at the context. Perhaps the most general use of emphasis is to distinguish *primary* information from what has been before mentioned or preunderstood. For instance, in the sentence, "Whosoever shall break one of the least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called *great* in the kingdom of heaven;"[2]—the accent in the last clause must be on "*great*," that being the only new idea.

[1] Τοῦτο δ' ἐστὶν, ὥσπερ ἔφη Πρόδικος, ὅτε νυστάζοιεν υἱ ἀκροαταὶ, παρεμβάλλειν τῆς πεντηκονταδράχμου αὐτοῖς.—Arist. Rhet. iii. 14. 9.

[2] Matt. v. 19.

Emphasis, again, may be applied to whole sentences and pages of your sermon; that is to say, when you wish to impress any part more forcibly than the rest, you give it a sententious and emphatic character, by laying a stress on more words than you otherwise would.

Another mode of giving emphasis, is, by variation of the rate of utterance: as, in the words spoken by Nathan to David, you would pronounce "Thou art the man" much more slowly than what preceded or followed. And this, by the way, is very necessary to be attended to in the expression of different emotions of the mind. But I shall not enlarge further on the rules of pronunciation, your own good sense and ear will be sufficient to teach you them.

Generally speaking, it may be laid down as a rule, that if you fail to gain the attention of your congregation, there is something amiss either in the matter or manner of your preaching.[1] Some preachers have a wonderful power of interesting the minds of their hearers. "Such was the interest with which that good and amiable prelate (Bishop Porteus) was heard, that attention was completely suspended, and the most profound silence prevailed through the different periods, till he arrived at their conclusion, when a general coughing, as if by common consent, or upon an appointed signal, immediately took place."[2] I have heard more modern preachers address their congregation with the same effect; but on this subject I shall speak more at large in the following letter.

[1] See Christian Observer, vol. v. 278. [2] Ibid vol. vii. 644.

LETTER XXXI.

EARNESTNESS AND FEELING.

Much has been said by writers on elocution[1] in praise or dispraise of *natural* manner: let me begin the present letter by a consideration of this point. If by natural manner be meant a familiar colloquial tone, few persons will contend that this is suited to the pulpit. For though it will, doubtless, excite attention, yet it will not call forth that *serious* attention which the subject of a sermon demands. Those preachers who adopt a manner approaching to colloquial familiarity, would do well to read the expression of their hearers' countenance. They would, I think, detect something more resembling a suppressed smile than serious interest; and it would be evident that their attention was kept alive, rather by curiosity than by any profitable feeling, or real desire of instruction.

But, perhaps, by natural manner is meant, that manner which a person naturally uses when speaking on solemn and serious subjects.[2] I am afraid, however, that in most young men we shall look for this manner in vain. Custom will be found too often to have superseded nature, at the age when a young man is called to the office of a preacher. It is but too true, that the education and habits of the present day are any thing but favourable to the development of holy

[1] See Whately's Rhetoric, part iv. chap. i. sect. 5.

[2] See Whately's Rhetoric.

and devotional feeling. A child will have a good natural manner unless his spirit be checked by harshness or spoiled by indulgence, but the schoolboy will lose much of the artlessness and sincerity of childhood. The expression of anger, scorn, and pride, will be too often strengthened by practice; or, on the other hand, the uncontrolled exhibition of mirth and good humour, or, of generosity and high spirit, may be developed and become habitual; but the piously serious and devotional feelings will be nipped in the bud, or at least kept back and subdued, by the chilling frost of ridicule. Nor, when he comes to mix with men, will he be likely to improve in these respects. There is so much reserve in the present state of society, with regard to the best and holiest feelings, that, however well principled and sincere a Christian a young man may be, yet there will be but little scope for the development of that expression of feeling which is most becoming in a Christian preacher.

Since, then, by natural manner is not meant your common colloquial way of speaking, and since you have seldom or never exercised your natural manner of speaking on serious and solemn subjects—because, except in conversation, you have not been accustomed to speak upon them at all—it follows, that by the natural manner so much and so justly recommended by some writers, we must consider that manner in which nature *would speak* on these particular subjects if she were encouraged; so that it comes to this, that, however paradoxical it may appear, you have this *natural* manner to *acquire*. I do not mean that you are to assume or affect that which you do not feel, but you must disembarrass yourself of your habitual reserve on these subjects, and do every thing you can to let nature resume her proper and unfettered course.[1]

[1] Id est maximè naturale quod fieri natura optimè patitur. Quinctilian, ix. 4.

The first point, then, at which you should aim, will be to unlearn all your faults,—"prima virtus vitio carere." You must get rid of all ungraceful peculiarities of tone and manner, and avoid affected mannerism. Most men have some peculiar way of expressing themselves, which, though unimportant on other occasions, is offensive when carried into the pulpit. And here I shall avail myself of the advice of Swift:—"You will do well," he says, in his letter to a young clergyman, "if you can prevail on some intimate and judicious friend to be your constant hearer, and allow him, with the utmost freedom, to give you notice of whatever he shall find amiss either in your voice or gesture; for want of which early warning, many clergymen continue defective and ridiculous to the end of their lives. Neither is it rare to observe, amongst excellent and learned divines, a certain ungracious manner, or an unhappy tone, which they never have been able to shake off."[1] That there is some truth in the Dean's remarks, your own observation doubtless has taught you; and certainly the plan which he recommends seems well calculated to enable you to avoid the faults into which others have fallen.

Having got rid of faults, the next step is to acquire excellence. "We should recommend," says an able writer,[2] "the adoption of a manner somewhat less dry and didactic, somewhat more warm, earnest, and devotional than generally prevails. . . . Either heaven and hell, redemption and eternity, are subjects awful, appalling, and splendid, or they are without meaning; and the preacher must not speak of these solemn and tremendous truths, as if he were collecting the result of a mathematical problem, or labouring out a point of political economy. Still (continues the same judi-

[1] Vol. viii. 337. Scott's Edition.

[2] See Quarterly Review, xxix. 305.

cious critic) this is a dangerous ground; and if young men are taught, or even permitted, to appeal to the vague and more easily excited faculties, the imagination and feelings, they will be apt to enter into a rivalry of tumor and inflation, or degenerate into puling and whining."

Avoiding the errors alluded to by the foregoing writer, and aiming at the excellencies which he describes, we shall find, that the essential points in manner are *earnestness* and *feeling*. On these points, especially the first, it is beyond the scope of my present design to attempt to lay down rules. None indeed can be laid down. "Caput est artis quod tamen tradi arte non potest." I would never recommend that an unreal earnestness should be assumed, and that which is real is not within the compass of art. "There is a force and earnestness in nature which art cannot imitate." All I can say on this deeply important subject is, that if you feel conscious of a want of earnestness, you must seek it from other and higher sources than the rules of art. You must seek it by redoubled diligence in studying and applying the Holy Word,—by serious meditation on the awful effects of sin, and on the value of immortal souls,—by increased attention to those committed to your care,—by deep thoughts on the fearful responsibility of your office,—but, above all, by frequent and earnest prayer for the assistance of the Holy Spirit. It is God's grace alone that can give you real earnestness.

Still it is possible for a minister to be sincere in heart, and yet, by reason of diffidence and bashfulness, to exhibit a want of earnestness in manner,—a fault into which young clergymen, who have but just engaged seriously in God's service, are most apt to fall. You must struggle manfully against this feeling, or it will greatly impede your usefulness, perhaps prevent you from ever becoming an effective preacher. Why *should* you feel bashfulness in the perform-

ance of your sacred duty? You have watched probably the advocate at the bar; you have marked his anxious desire to persuade, and have seen him fix the attention of his hearers by the business-like earnestness of his manner. Do you, then, speak as if you were about your heavenly Master's business,—as if you were dealing with the spirits of men for real and important purposes. And in order to speak thus, you must not only really feel it, but must not be ashamed of *showing* that you feel it. Why should you? The advocate is not ashamed to appear really earnest in what he is about. His own interest, and the interest of his client, depends on the success of his exertions. And is it not the same with you? Are not the eternal interests of yourself and your hearers at stake? Only feel this, and you will not fail of being earnest.

Let me encourage you by the example of an excellent preacher, now no more. "We earnestly propose," (says the Christian Observer, in reviewing the sermons of Dean Milner,) "we earnestly propose to the imitation of the clergy, the affectionate and affectingly solemn manner of these discourses. The whole soul of the preacher is evidently occupied with one idea, the unspeakably awful nature of the work in which he is engaged. He is addressing immortal, but sinful and perishing creatures, in the presence of their Saviour and their Judge, and on the margin of the grave; which, if he cannot rouse them to consideration, will prove the threshold of that place of torment, 'where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched,' and from which there is no redemption. In this lies the secret, as we suspect, of his having so remarkably fixed the attention of his hearers. We listen, *because he is in earnest*, and speaks to us with affectionate seriousness. The attention cannot flag under such appeals."

The second requisite for impressive manner in the pulpi

is *pathos*, or *the expression of feeling*—a point which, perhaps, admits of more regulation than the former. Not that feeling is less the emanation of the heart than earnestness, but because, in the present state of society, it is even more unnaturally checked; it is robbed of its fair proportions, and requires to be again brought out into action. Few nations so systematically avoid the expression of feeling as the English. Amongst the French and Italians you may distinguish the feeling of a speaker from the tone of his voice, without understanding one word which he utters; and so you may, sometimes, amongst the lower orders of this country. But in the educated classes, the feelings are smothered by habitual reserve, and a cold monotony of expression veils the emotion of the heart. Preachers partake of this national reserve, and will sometimes speak with earnestness, but without a grain of feeling. They will urge their *argument* with force and energy, but entirely fail when they come to the *exhortation*.

Now *one of the chief organs for the expression of feeling is the tone of voice*. Nature has adapted a particular tone to each emotion, and nothing is more important for one who desires to be an impressive preacher, than to break down those barriers and impediments which habit has raised, and to suffer nature to flow in her own proper channel of expression. Nor is this so difficult as might appear: it is much easier to restore nature to her proper place, than to force her out of it. Much may be done in private by the habit of frequently addressing your parishioners, especially the sick, in a solemn and affectionate manner, on the most interesting subjects connected with their eternal welfare; and, that you may be able to carry this habit with you into your public ministration, it will be necessary to accustom your ear to hear your own voice, speaking loudly, in a similar strain. A young preacher will sometimes be startled by his own

voice. In the ardour of delivery he will give vent to the feelings of his heart, in the expressive tone of nature. The audience will all be mute, every noise will be hushed; and the preacher, too modest to suppose that this is precisely the effect which ought to be produced by the "unconscious rhetoric of his own earnestness," will be abashed, and imagine that he has committed some solecism. In order to avoid this sensation, and to accustom yourself to hear your own voice speaking in an impassioned tone, I think something may be done, (though I am aware there are different opinions on this subject,) by practising recitation. We have, you know, the highest oratorical authority for this mode of proceeding. There will not be any need for you to declaim on the sea-shore like Demosthenes; for a Christian congregation is not quite so turbulent and stormy an assembly as a mob of Athenian legislators. Still, if you wish to develop your powers of pathetic address, I know no better plan than to imitate the example of this great orator,[1] in practising recitation. You may do it at home, and alone. On no account recite your own sermon which you intend to preach the next day, for then you will be sure to deliver it in an affected and premeditated manner; but merely practise recitation with a view to the exercise of your voice and ear in variety of intonation. Take any book which contains the language of excited or devotional feeling,—the Psalms are perhaps the best,—and read aloud with all the expression which you are able to give it. Nature will teach you the tone in which each sentiment should be uttered; you will cease to be startled by the impassioned tone of your own voice; and, when you ascend the pulpit, you will

[1] To come to later authority, Mrs. H. More mentions that she found Mr. Pitt alone reciting Milton. See also Bacon's Works, vol. i. 543, 477.

be more likely to deliver your own composition with feeling and eloquence.

Do not, I beseech you, so far misunderstand me, as to suppose that I mean to suggest this, or any other rule, as a *substitute* for heartfelt earnestness. All I mean to say is this,—that if, as I imagine is the case with many young clergymen,—you feel a painful bashfulness, which prevents you from giving full utterance to your real feelings, then the suggestions which I have made will, I think, help you to get the better of a fault, which, if not struggled against from the first, will, perhaps, hang by you through life.

And here it may be observed, that pulpit oratory calls into action a very different set of emotions, and, consequently, a different set of tones, from other kinds of speaking. All the violent and angry passions must be subdued or softened down into pity, or, at most, indignation. The principal intonations of voice required are such as express encouragement, solemn warning, affectionate expostulation, earnest instruction, charity, and good-will. Sometimes a mild kind of irony, sometimes reproof, rarely a degree of horror. Such are the tones of voice which you should endeavour to acquire; nature has given them to you; you have only to restore nature to her office.

It will be right, before concluding, to caution you against an excess of impassioned expression, which is commonly called *ranting*. In recommending a more unreserved expression of feeling than is usually adopted, I am far from advocating any thing excessive or violent; or any thing difficult to attain; least of all, any thing affected. It is within the power of most persons to acquire that feeling and earnest manner which is so necessary to win the attention. High eloquence is the offspring of excited feeling; and it is scarcely reasonable to suppose that a clergyman should be thus highly excited once, or sometimes twice, every Sunday,

and this on different subjects. Warmth of feeling also depends a good deal on constitutional temperament, and exciting causes. We are not to expect that every parochial preacher shall have the energetic warmth of St. Paul, and protest that "he dies daily;" or declare that he "wished himself accursed from Christ for his brethren." What was natural and eloquent and forcible in an Apostle, who gave up every earthly comfort for the furtherance of the Gospel, would appear overstrained in the mouth of a clergyman, who gains a comfortable subsistence by his profession. Sudden and violent bursts of passion are apt to disgust a modern congregation, especially if ill-timed and affected. This has been well called the "pyrotechnic" or "sky-rocket" style of preaching, being little more impressive than a display of fireworks. On the whole, however, "coldness is a far more dangerous extreme than overmuch heat." "Depend upon it," says Bishop Jebb, "animated enthusiasm will be more than a match for dry and frigid ethics."

A decided fault in the manner of delivery, is an appearance of excessive eagerness. Eagerness is very different from earnestness. It is the tone of a controversialist and disputant, rather than of a Christian instructor. "Most true it is," says Hooker, "that when men's affections do frame their opinions, they are in defence of error more earnest," (perhaps he might have said more eager,) "a great deal, than for the most part sound believers in the maintenance of truth." In argument, especially, an evident solicitude betokens a doubt as to the strength of your position, and nothing is so likely to generate opposition as the appearance of expecting or challenging it. A grave, calm, and decided tone more naturally belongs to the manner of one who feels that he is standing on firm and solid ground.

There is much spurious affectation of the excellencies above described, which passes current with an indiscrimi-

nating audience for fine preaching. Some preachers, by dint of self-possession, and a bold and confident manner, aided by a deep-toned, authoritative voice, have gained great celebrity in the place where they have laboured; but, I fear, the real good which they have done has not always been proportioned to their celebrity. My object, however, in these letters, is not to make you a popular preacher, but to put you in the way of attaining real excellence;—at least to enable you to bring out what you have in you. If God has given you a poetical imagination, and high powers of eloquence, what I say will not in the least tend to curb them, but will, on the contrary, (I am sanguine enough to hope,) promote and improve them. But should your talent be of a lower, though perhaps not less useful, order, I hope to be the means of leading you to make the most of whatever degree of it you may possess.

LETTER XXXII.

ON GESTURE AND EXPRESSION.

Delivery consists in three things, the Voice, the Gesture, and the Expression of Countenance. On the first we have already spoken: the present letter will be devoted to the two last.

Opinions differ as to the advantage and propriety of Gesture in speaking; the voice of antiquity seems to be unanimous in its favour, but it has fallen in estimation with modern writers. "If," says Johnson, "I could once find a speaker in 'Change-Alley raising the price of stocks by the power of persuasive gestures, I should very zealously recommend the study of this art; but having never seen any action by which language was much assisted, I have been hitherto inclined to doubt whether my countrymen are not blamed too hastily for their calm and motionless utterance. . . . Neither the judges of our laws, nor the representatives of our people, would be much affected by laboured gesticulation, or believe any man the more, because he rolled his eyes, or puffed his cheeks, or spread abroad his arms, or stamped the ground, or thumped his breast, or turned his eyes, sometimes to the ceiling, and sometimes to the floor. Upon men intent on truth the arm of the orator has little power. Whether action may not be yet of use in churches, where the preacher addresses a mingled audience,

may deserve inquiry. It is certain that the senses are more powerful as the reason is weaker, and that he whose ears convey little to the mind, may sometimes listen with his eyes, till truth takes possessinn of his heart. If there be any use of gesticulation, it must be applied to the ignorant and rude, who will be more affected by vehemence than delighted by propriety. In the pulpit little action can be proper. . . . Yet, as all innocent means are to be used for the propagation of truth, I would not deter those who are engaged in preaching to common congregations from any practice which they may find persuasive; for, compared with the conversion of sinners, propriety and elegance are less than nothing."

It must, however, be confessed, that nature decidedly sanctions the use of gesture. Nature certainly points out that appropriate gesture gives force and vivacity to utterance. Yet, somehow or other, it does not seem as if gesture was natural to an Englishman. Whether it be that the want of habit, or hereditary disuse has incapacitated us from acquiring it, certain it is that action in speaking does not commonly improve an Englishman's address. It appears assumed and studied, or else some awkward movement is contracted, and becomes habitual.

We must, not, however, as Johnson does, confound violent gesticulation with the use of moderate gesture. The former will scarcely be defended. No doubt a preacher who gets up into the pulpit, and throws himself into various attitudes, will collect a congregation, and gain attention, as Diogenes did, when he began to sing in the streets of Athens, or Père Brydayne, when he walked out in his surplice, and rang a bell round the town of Aigues Mortes; and as several orators of our own day have done, by various tricks both in the church and in the senate. By the use of vehement gesticulation, a preacher may succeed in keeping

his congregation awake for one Sunday at least, and will have his church well filled the next; but for a continuance it will be found of little advantage. Like other stimulants, its effect is lessened by repetition. Besides, it has a manifest tendency to divert attention from the substance of a discourse, and must, therefore, be an impediment to the wholesome reception of it.

But there is no doubt that moderate gesture gives energy and impressiveness to what is said, especially when it is natural and spontaneous. To the extemporaneous preacher some degree of gesture is absolutely necessary, because, like the actor on the stage, he must find employment for his hands. But when you have your sermon written before you, your hands are occasionally used in turning over the leaves of the manuscript, so that the want of action is not so much observed.

The question is, how to acquire that sort of moderate, just, and spontaneous action, which shall not divert attention from your words, but rather add to their effect. I doubt whether the rules commonly laid down have done much good. "When speaking in public," says Blair, "*study* to preserve as much dignity as possible in the whole attitude of your body." Many a good preacher has been spoiled by following this rule. *Studied* and affected gesture is one of the greatest blemishes of a preacher; it must be natural, or it is worse than useless. Blair, however, was speaking at random. He meant, rather, "*avoid undignified* attitudes;" and in the next page he says, that action should be learnt at home; a rule which, with certain qualifications, it would be well to adopt. In studying action at home, do not practise the delivery of your own sermon. Do not read over on Saturday night the sermon which you are going to preach next day, and say to yourself, "Here I must hold up my forefinger with a significant motion; here my right hand with a

graceful wave; here I will be like St. Paul at Athens; here like St. John in the wilderness." If you "study attitudes" in this way, it must needs happen that your sermon will be delivered in an affected and studied manner. But if you must study action (and I have no wish to dissuade you from it) the least objectionable plan which I can think of, is to recite, with appropriate action, the work of some standard author.[1] But, after all, nature will be far more useful to you than any rules, to teach propriety of gesture. Whatever you do, be sure when you get into the pulpit not to think *then* at all about your action. If the matter of your discourse be stirring and animated, appropriate gesture will probably come of its own accord; but if it does not, never mind, you may be a very good preacher without it; whereas, if it is unnatural and forced, it will entirely ruin the effect of your preaching.[2]

Of far more importance to the English preacher, is the last point in delivery which I shall notice—*the expression of countenance.* If the different passions and feelings require to be delivered in different tones of voice, at least equally do they demand a different expression of countenance. To wear the same imperturbable visage, when you are setting forth the loving-kindness of God, or denouncing his wrath, when you are expatiating on the comforts of divine grace, or picturing the degradation and misery of sin,—to look with unvaried expression, whether you are warning or encouraging, reproving or praising, whether you are setting forth the horrors of eternal suffering, or endeavouring to give a faint picture of those joys which "eye hath not seen, nor

[1] "Demosthenes grande quoddam intuens speculum componere actionem solebat." Quinctil. xi. 3.

[2] "Il faut remuer les bras parce qu'on est animé; mais il ne faudroit pas, pour paroître animé, remuer les bras." Fénélon, Dialogues sur l'Eloquence.

ear heard;"—to speak on all these topics with the same cold, unvarying countenance, is to reject one of the most forcible auxiliaries of the pulpit. "Ad summum dominatur maximè vultus: hoc supplices, hoc minaces, hoc blandi, hoc tristes, hoc hilares, hoc erecti, hoc submissi sumus. Hoc pendent homines, hunc intuentur, hunc spectant etiam antequam dicamus. Hoc quosdam amamus, hoc odimus, hoc plurima intelligimus."[1] One point, in which expression of countenance surpasses every thing else is this, that it signifies *at once* the feeling of the speaker; words can only gradually unfold the meaning; action is useful to give force to words as they are uttered, but the expression denotes the state of the speaker's mind, and the tone of what he is about to say, before he utters a word. It is not possible to do much by rules to assist you in acquiring this most excellent gift, for it is, even more than the tones of voice, the work of nature. However, I think I may give you one or two hints which will be useful.

In the first place, make it a rule to *look your congregation in the face.* It is surprising to see how many preachers are unable or unaccustomed to do this. Some will keep their eyes constantly on the book; others, if they raise them, will close them in the act of looking up—(a habit which is acquired in the desk: for if, when you raise your eyes in praying, they meet those of your congregation, it is natural to close them, rather than seem to address your fellow-creatures instead of God: this you should avoid by contriving to turn your face to a window or some vacant place during the prayers: it is a very bad habit carried into the pulpit.) Others will preach against a dead wall, or a pillar, rather than encounter the gaze of their hearers. Others, again,

[1] Quinctilian, lib. xi. cap. 3. "Rien ne parle tant que le visage." —Fénélon.

will turn their faces hither and thither, as if addressing different parts of their congregation, but their lack-lustre and unimpressive eyes show that they are wandering in vacancy. Half the force of preaching is lost by this vague and indiscriminate address. Hear what is said by Herbert on this matter: "The country parson, when he preacheth, procures attention by all possible art, both by earnestness of speech, it being natural to men to think that when there is much earnestness, there is something worth hearing, and by a diligent and busy cast of the eye among the auditors, with letting them know, that he observes who marks and who not; and with particularizing his speech now to the younger sort, now to the elder, now to the poor, now to the rich;—this is for you, and this for you;—for particulars touch and awake more than generals." The power of the eyes may be noticed in common conversation. So long as a man you are conversing with looks you in the face, you cannot help listening to him, whatever nonsense he may speak. It is as if he held you by the button. But if he looks at the wall, or out of the window, you are less able to attend to him, though he should speak oracles. The first thing, then, is to look your congregation in the face. Consider it a duty to get the better of that ill-timed bashfulness, which, if not corrected early, will become habitual. I do not recommend you to assume a bold and confident air, for that is unseemly and repulsive, but a look of manly self-possession. There is another sort of expression highly unbecoming in a Christian minister; I mean a sort of *nonchalant* and careless look, almost as if the preacher considered himself above his work; and cared not whether his congregation were the better for his preaching or no. Oh! how little does such a preacher know of what spirit he should be! All the most benevolent and evangelic feelings should light up the countenance of the minister of the Gospel, while he is declaring the message of

mercy: he should mingle the dignity of God's ambassador with the benevolence of a friend or father. He should be like the minister so well described by Dryden—

> "Nothing reserved or sullen was to see,
> But sweet regards and pleasing sanctity;
> Mild was his accent, and his action free."

We all know this manner, and probably have seen it instanced. The question is, how to attain it. My chief advice is, that you *do not think of yourself:* this is a great fault in a preacher. To avoid this, some will tell you to think on the subject on which you are speaking; there, I think, they are wrong. To think on your subject will help you to acquire varied tones of voice, but not varied expression of countenance. I would bid you *think more of the persons to whom you are speaking; or rather to think of your subject with constant reference to them.* It is not enough to feel that you have written, and are delivering, a faithful discourse on Gospel truth, that you are really and truly declaring the counsel of God, but think of those *to whom* you are delivering it. Do not consider whether you are acquitting *yourself* faithfully, but whether *they* are listening to their profit. Endeavour to look as deeply as you can into their hearts; and remember, that unless what you say enters there, however faithful and able it may be, it will be of no avail. Reflect not only that you are God's ambassador, but that you are sent to those who sit before you. Feel this, and your looks will show it.

It will help you to acquire this mode of address, if you shape your discourse a good deal in the first and second person, particularly the latter, and, as Herbert advises, address yourself often to different classes. If you speak to young or old, you naturally cast your eye round to see who there are of that description; and this is partly what is

desired. You may, also, introduce such words as "observe, mark, attend I beg you," which you can scarcely utter without looking earnestly at those whom you bid attend.

One would naturally suppose that, in respect to the matter of which we are speaking, the extemporaneous preacher would have the advantage over the preacher of written sermons; for that the one would be able to look constantly at those whom he addressed, whereas the eyes of the other would be fixed too often on his manuscript. Observation has taught me that the reverse is often the case; for the extemporaneous preacher, unless he be a man of very great talent and self-possession, is obliged to turn his whole mind to his subject; he can spare no portion of his attention elsewhere; every faculty is absorbed in composing as he goes along. Walton, describing Hooker's style of preaching, says—"His eyes were always fixed on one place, to prevent his imagination from wandering, insomuch that he seemed to *study as he spoke*." He states, also, that "his sermons were neither long *nor earnest*." But the preacher who has the words of his sermon written before him is perfectly free from embarrassment on their account, and is at liberty to give a part of his attention to the feelings of those whom he addresses. If he finds them inattentive, he is not abashed and confused, as the extemporary preacher is apt to be, but goes straight forward, striving to regain their attention; if, on the other hand, he marks excited interest, his own feelings are sympathetically moved, and fresh force is given to his delivery. And, again, the extemporaneous preacher is often evidently embarrassed at the close of his sentences, in gathering what he is to say next. But when the sermon is written, the preacher continues confidently to the end of each paragraph; and can spare time to cast his eyes round to mark the impression, before he proceeds to another branch of his subject.

Such are the observations which I have to make on delivery. Its real power depends, as you will have seen, not on any histrionic artifices of tone and posture, but on "the strong graphical expression of the feelings of the soul," pourtrayed by the tone, the manner, and expression—"the commanding mind becoming visible,"[1] and the Christian spirit felt. To attain which, it is requisite that your hearers should be convinced, not only that you speak the genuine feelings of your own heart, but that you speak *to them*. Hence, highly important as are emphasis and pathos, and useful as gesture may be, there is something even beyond this in the searching and particularizing glance of countenance. This is the "caput artis;" this is that which, beyond all other gifts, calls forth the sympathy of your hearers, and opens their heart to the reception of your words.

I cannot do better than close the subject of delivery with an account, given by Dr. Gregory, of the effect produced by the preaching of Robert Hall, who, by common consent of men of all opinions, possessed, in the highest excellence, the essential qualities of delivery. "From the commencement of his discourse an almost breathless anxiety prevailed, deeply impressive and solemnizing from its singular intenseness: not a sound was heard but that of the preacher's voice; scarcely an eye but was fixed upon him, not a countenance that he did not watch, and read, and interpret, as he surveyed them again and again with his ever excursive glance. As he advanced and increased in animation, five or six of his auditors would be seen to rise and lean forward over the front of their pews, still keeping their eyes fixed on him. Some new or striking sentiment or expression would, in a few moments, cause others to rise in like manner; shortly afterwards, still more; and so on,

[1] See Christian Observer, vol. xiv. 523.

until long before the close of the sermon it often happened that a considerable portion of the congregation was seen standing; every eye directed to the preacher, yet, now and then, for a moment glancing from one to another; thus transmitting and reciprocating thought and feeling. Mr. Hall himself, though manifestly absorbed in his subject, conscious of the whole, receiving new animation from what he thus witnessed, reflecting it back upon those who were already alive to the inspiration, until all that was susceptible of thought and emotion seemed wound up to the utmost elevation of thought upon earth, when he would close, and they reluctantly and slowly resume their seats."

LETTER XXXIII.

EXTEMPORANEOUS PREACHING.

We shall not have fully considered the subject of Delivery without entering upon the question, whether it is best that sermons should be written or extemporaneous. There is a good deal of prejudice and difference of opinion abroad on this subject. Some persons will leave their own parish church, and travel all over town and country, to hear an extemporary preacher; while others, who happen to have one in their own parish, will be constantly complaining of his extravagance or shallowness, and wish he would take the trouble to write his sermons.

By the term "extemporary," we do not mean what Johnson says it is, "unpremeditated;" we only mean that the preacher has not his sermon written out. It is the custom of the French preachers to *mandate* their sermons, or preach *memoriter*. Indeed, the excellent Massillon was in the pulpit nothing more than an accomplished actor; every sentence which he uttered was composed and practised beforehand. His most celebrated sermons are said to have been announced for repetition, like a theatrical performance, and persons would flock to hear him, and speculate in what manner he would pronounce certain well-known passages. Some there are in this country who follow the French fashion, notwithstanding its laboriousness and difficulty;

others will get by heart the principal passages of their sermons; others will have the skeleton only before them. But, it is probable, that no preachers in the present day ascend the pulpit without more or less preparation, not of the matter only, but of the language. The only essential for an extemporary sermon is that the preacher shall not have it set down on paper before him.

It has been generally asserted that written sermons came into use amongst the regular clergy about the time of the civil wars, in opposition to the violent extemporaneous harangues of the puritans. But Burnet, in his History of the Reformation, speaks of this practice having grown up in the time of Henry VIII., in consequence partly of the danger which preachers incurred, and partly of their ignorance.[1] "Those who were licensed to preach," he says, "being often accused for their sermons, and complaints being made to the King by hot men on both sides, they came generally to write and read their sermons, and thence the reading of sermons grew into a practice in this church; in which if there was not that heat of fire which the friars had shown in their declamations, so that the passions of the hearers were not so much wrought on by it, yet it has produced the greatest treasure of weighty, grave, and solid sermons that ever the Church of God had; which does in a great measure compensate that seeming flatness to vulgar ears, that is in the delivery of them."

The witty monarch, Charles II., would, I fear, come under the censure of the historian, as being a "vulgar" hearer of sermons, if we may judge from the following proclamation, extracted from the statute-book of the university of Cambridge.

[1] Christian Observer, vol. xxxix. 164.

"VICE-CHANCELLOR AND GENTLEMEN,

"Whereas his Majesty is informed that the practice of reading sermons is generally taken up by the preachers before the university, and, therefore, continues even before himself; his Majesty hath commanded me to signify to you his pleasure, that the said practice, which took its beginning from the disorders of the late times, be wholly laid aside, and that the said preachers deliver their sermons, both in Latin and English, by memory, without books; as being a way of preaching which his Majesty judgeth most agreeable to the use of foreign churches, to the custom of the university heretofore, and to the nature of that holy exercise: and that his Majesty's command in these premises be duly regarded and observed, his further pleasure is, that the names, of all such ecclesiastical persons as shall continue the present supine and slothful way of preaching be, from time, to time. signified to him by the Vice-Chancellor for the time being, on pain of his Majesty's displeasure.

"*Oct. 8th*, 1674." "MONMOUTH."

It does not appear that the reproof of his Majesty had the desired effect, for the practice of writing sermons has continued from that time to the present. Extemporaneous preaching is, perhaps, becoming, if any thing, rather more prevalent; but there exists, in some quarters, something of the old feeling against it. Perhaps it would be correct to say that this question, like most others, is commonly decided according to the general bias of people's minds: those who are fond of things as they are, like the common mode of writing sermons, and those who are inclined to novelty, prefer extemporaneous discourses.

Before considering the respective merits of the two modes, it will be well to notice one circumstance which

should not be omitted in the estimate, and that is, that those preachers who adopt the extemporaneous mode are, for the most part, if not clever men, at least pains-taking and ambitious to excel; so that you can scarcely form a judgment, whether the general adoption of that style would be advisable or not, from the success, whatever it may be, of the few. Those persons who frequent churches, where they may hear extemporary preachers, would not, perhaps, be content to "sit under" every parish priest who should preach in the same way. There is already, in too many persons, an impatience of mediocrity of talent in the pulpit which is any thing but a favourable sign of religious feeling. Would not this feeling be increased, and, perhaps, spread into new quarters, if every parochial clergyman were to attempt to preach extempore?

The truth is, that, in order to extemporize powerfully on any subject, it requires that the mind be intently fixed, and the feelings concentrated, upon it. When a preacher has chosen one of the grand and pregnant principles of religion, if he be a man of ordinary talent, and have some practice in his art, he will probably be able, by an extemporaneous discourse, to rivet the attention of the hearers, and to command their feelings. This is the secret of the eloquence of itinerant preachers. The sublimity of the subject compensates for all defects. But these highly interesting subjects cannot be dwelt on every Sunday by the same preacher before the same congregation; and even if they could, they must lose much of their interest by repetition. A missionary, travelling from place to place, may effectually move the various congregations which he addresses, by speaking on these spirit-stirring topics; but the parochial minister is obliged every week to furnish new subjects, and fresh matter, and appropriate illustrations; and it is not likely that he should feel in the same intense manner on

subjects of minor importance, as he would if he were speaking on the grand principles of religion. If he spoke as his impulse led him, he would perhaps find himself running into precisely the same train of argument and exhortation as he had used on the preceding Sunday. The question, therefore, resolves itself into this, *not* whether extemporaneous speech be more forcible or no, nor whether an unwritten sermon be preferable to a written one considered abstractedly; but whether, by extemporaneous or written discourses, a parochial minister of the Church of England will most edify his congregation, during a ministry of many years.

On this point the general question must mainly depend. Let the preacher be a man not only of exalted piety and unaffected zeal, but of clear head, lively imagination, and retentive memory, so as to have the contents of the sacred volume at his command; let him be free from all embarrassment of manner, clear in the arrangement of his matter, and perfectly fluent in his speech,—such a man may do what he pleases. Whether he write his sermons or deliver them unwritten, they cannot fail of captivating and moving his hearers. But we are describing a Paul or an Apollos, or at least such a preacher as appears but once in an age. How many will you find in any church, sect, or persuasion, who will answer this description? And if any of these qualifications be wanting in a considerable degree, the power of his preaching will be in a great measure lost. Let the preacher be clear-headed, fluent, and pious, but let him want constitutional warmth or lively imagination, and his extemporaneous discourse will not be one jot more interesting than if it were written; or if he wants fluency of speech, if he hesitates and stammers, and his words and sentiments are doled forth with evident embarrassment; or if he is constantly obliged to refer to his notes, and is thinking of what comes next, more than of what he is saying; or if he uses

over and over again the same expressions,—in all these cases the hearers either experience an uncomfortable feeling of anxiety, or a sensation approaching to contempt. Or if, on the other hand, he speaks fluently enough, but it is plain that his discourse is learnt by heart, and repeated as a lesson, it is looked upon by the congregation as a sort of fraud practised upon them, and the intended effect of extemporaneous preaching is destroyed; for its principal charm consists in the words flowing, or at least seeming to flow, fresh and pure from the heart.

Now I believe that nine at least out of ten extemporaneous preachers fall into the errors and difficulties described; and in all such cases the greater part of the congregation would prefer, and be more edified by, a good plain written sermon. When a sermon is well written, and delivered in an earnest and feeling manner, the attention of the hearer is fixed solely on the meaning; they are not distracted by anxiety lest the preacher should come to a stand; nor, on the other hand, are they in admiration of his fluency;—both of which feelings interfere very much with the profitable reception of a discourse. They know also that what is spoken is the speaker's deliberate opinion; whereas a man who clothes his ideas in unpremeditated language will often blurt out a good deal of nonsense. "Many foolish things," says an old writer, "fall from wise men, if they speak in haste, and be extemporal." "Nothing great," says South, "ought to be ventured upon without preparation; but, above all, how sottish it is to engage extempore, where the concern is eternity!"

Great complaints, however, are made, on the other hand, of the monotonous and uninteresting tone with which clergymen are apt to read their sermons. To this I answer, let no clergyman, on any account, *read* his sermon; let him *preach* it. The monotonous tone of voice, into which read-

ers commonly fall, arises from a circumstance noticed by Dr. Bell: "The difficulty of learning to read," (he says,) "is that while *with the voice* we are pronouncing one part of the sentence, *with our eyes* we are looking forward to another; to which may be added, that at the same time we are gathering the meaning of the whole sentence in the mind." It is obvious that this objection does not apply to preaching your own composition. The monotony of reading is attributable to the circumstance of not knowing what is coming: you cannot venture to use an impassioned tone of voice, because you cannot tell whether the words which follow will bear you out, or whether you may not come to a lame and impotent conclusion, and fall into the predicament described by Horace,

> Amphora cœpit
> Institui; currente rotâ cur urceus exit?

But, when what you are pronouncing is your own composition, and consequently you know what is coming, and begin a sentence with the same feeling and train of thought with which you composed it, there is no reason why you should not give full scope to the tones of your voice; nay, you may do it with more freedom than if you had to search for words, and were apprehensive of breaking down. Nevertheless it must be confessed, that preachers are too apt to carry with them the reading tone into the pulpit. All that I contend for is, that there is no *necessity* for this; it may be corrected with care, and therefore does not form a valid objection against written sermons. Are there not many preachers, whose names I need not mention, who always fill their churches, and rivet their hearers' attention, and exercise a perfect dominion over their feelings, yet have every word of their sermons penned before them. Why may not you do the same? what would you wish to do more?

On the whole, then, you will perceive that I am in favour of written discourses in a parish pulpit. I would rather say, that I am well satisfied with the present state of public opinion on this subject. Extemporaneous preaching is not required of a clergyman, but if he chooses to preach in that style, and does it well, few people will blame him. The choice is left to his own discretion, and knowledge of his own powers.[1] Some, who are naturally bold, confident, and ardent in disposition, and fluent and voluble in speech, will cultivate the extemporary style; others, who have less power of speech, more diffidence, a nicer perception perhaps, and habits of closer investigation and reasoning, will prefer the written mode. In some the very sight of a congregation would be likely to excite a warmth of feeling, and corresponding warmth of expression, which would never have occurred to them in their study. In others the same spectacle would awe their senses, confuse their mind, and take away even the power of speech. I will not attempt to judge between these two classes of ministers, or pronounce which are most useful in their vocation. Doubtless God raises up proper instruments for the edification of his church, and bestows on them their proper gifts, which they are bound to cultivate for the good of others.[2] While, therefore, we

[1] See Christian Observer, vol. iii. 534.

[2] Some preachers adopt a semi-extemporaneous style; that is to say, they write part of their sermon, and leave a part to be composed at the time of delivery. If any one finds this mode most suitable to his powers, he is right to adopt it; but I never (but once) met with one who seemed to me to preach so impressively in this way, as others whose sermons are either entirely written or entirely extemporary: yet I have often observed an occasional off-hand remark made very happily. Thus Bishop Hall says, "In my poor and plain fashion I penned every word, in the same order as I hoped to deliver it, although in the expression I listed not to be a slave of syllables." I think this better than the *premeditated extemporizing* of a part of the sermon.

earnestly covet the best gifts, let us chiefly "follow after charity."[1]

But, though well satisfied with the discretion allowed to preachers in this matter, I cannot say that I admire the way in which that discretion is exercised. The pulpits generally selected for extemporaneous preaching are, unfortunately, just those which are least calculated for it. An extemporary preacher will usually establish himself in a populous town, with a view to preach before a large congregation: whereas, the most suitable places for this style are remote villages, where two or three only are gathered together. Here the preacher feels himself superior to his flock, and labours, consequently, under no embarrassment or want of confidence. Here a sensible and pious clergyman, without high talent, may use the extemporaneous mode with great advantage, especially in lectures; for in them deep reasoning is not required, nor any thing but elementary teaching.

I will add a few rules which may be of use, if you desire to obtain the art of preaching or lecturing extempore.

In speaking, as in most other things, excellence can rarely be attained unless you begin early,

"Adeo in teneris adsuescere multum est."

The following are the unpublished opinions of one of the chief orators[2] of the present day. They refer to the education of a young lawyer.

"The beginning of the art" (he says) "is to acquire the habit of easy speaking, and in whatever way this can be had

When a part is written and a part extemporaneous, the inherent faults of the two styles appear more plainly by the contrast; the former appears formal, the latter vague and loose. I may, however, possibly have been unfortunate in the specimens which I have heard.

[1] 1 Cor. xiv. 1.

[2] Lord Brougham.

(which individual inclination or accident will generally direct, and may safely be allowed to do) it must be had."

"Now I differ from all other Doctors of Rhetoric in this; I say, let him first learn to speak easily and fluently,—as well and as sensibly as he can, no doubt,—but, at any rate, let him learn to speak. This is to eloquence or good public speaking, what the being able to talk, in a child, is to good grammatical speech. It is the requisite foundation, and on it you must build. Moreover it can only be acquired young; therefore let it by all means, and at any sacrifice, be got hold of forthwith. But, in acquiring it, every sort of slovenly error will also be acquired. It must be got by a habit of *easy writing*,—which, as Windham said, proves *hard reading*,—by a custom of talking *too much* in company, by speaking in debating societies with little attention to rule, and more love of saying something at any rate, than saying any thing well. I can even suppose that more attention will be paid to the *matter* in such discussions than the *manner* of saying it; yet, still, to say it easily—ad libitum—to be able to say what you choose,—what you have to say,—this is the first requisite; to acquire which every thing else must be, for the present, sacrificed. The next step is the grand one,—to convert this kind of easy speaking into chaste eloquence; and here there is but one rule, which I do earnestly entreat your son to set daily and nightly before him, the Greek models."

These able remarks, though addressed to a young lawyer, will, with certain qualifications, apply to a young clergyman. It may not be so absolutely necessary for him to "get hold of" the art of speaking "at any sacrifice," still it is well worth his while to take great pains to do so. During the course of his academical career, opportunities of speaking amongst his equals will, doubtless, occur. If there is a good debating society, he will do well to belong to it, with a view to exer-

cise himself in speaking. And one thing I would here beg you to observe, which is, that on all, even the most trivial occasions, whether in writing a letter or conversing with a friend, you should avoid using quaint and uncouth expressions, for it will be very difficult to unlearn them : you should acquire the habit of expressing yourself, not with pedantic precision, but in good grammatical language. With regard to the use of the Greek models, (valuable as they are,) perhaps the writings of St. Paul, and other parts of Scripture, will claim an equal share of the preacher's attention,—if it be merely as models of eloquence. There is one rule, to which the writer of the foregoing remarks has not adverted, and that is,—that a young speaker in a debating society, or elsewhere, should make a point of taking the side in the debate to which his own opinion really and truly inclines, and use such arguments as he believes to be sound and just. No habit is worse, I am inclined to think, for any orator, but certainly for one preparing himself for the pulpit, than to adopt either side of an argument for the sake of showing ingenuity. Sincerity is the soul of pulpit eloquence. Indeed *every* orator loses much of his influence, if it be suspected that he speaks other sentiments than those which he believes to be true. A vain speaker is bad enough, but an insincere one is intolerable.

There are, however, many young men, who, from one cause or other, go through school and college without ever having attempted to acquire the art of speaking, and consequently, when they come to man's estate, have it entirely to learn. Possibly this may be your case at the present time, and you may feel anxious now to remedy the deficiency, and acquire the art of extemporaneous preaching. I think you are quite right if you do feel this wish, for you may find it an effectual means of promoting the Gospel; but I will not promise you the same success as if you had begun earlier.

Burnet advises a young preacher to "talk freely to himself on subjects suited to the pulpit, and to study to give his thoughts all the heat and flight about them that he can. By a very few years' practice of *two or three such soliloquies a day*, chiefly in the morning, when the head is clearest, and the spirits are liveliest, a man will contract great easiness both in thinking and speaking." If you adopt this plan, it would be prudent to begin the exercise of your talent in some small country church, where you will be able to speak out with greater freedom than before an educated audience. This is important; because if you should fail the first time, you might not easily pluck up courage to make a second attempt, but a successful *debut* would give you confidence to proceed.

The following is an approved recipe for learning to speak extemporaneously. First *make* a sermon. Do not steal it, or borrow it, or buy it, but make it; then write it out legibly, leaving every other page a blank; then write on the blank pages, a short abstract or abbreviation, setting it down opposite the original. Having prepared your sermon in this manner, you must, when you enter the pulpit, double down the sermon itself, and preach from the abstract, filling up the blanks from your recollection; which, as the sermon was composed by yourself, you will probably not find much difficulty in doing. Should your memory fail you must have recourse in the next place to your invention; should both prove treacherous, you must, as a last resource, turn to your manuscript which was doubled down; and as it is written opposite the abstract, you will be able to find it immediately. But the knowledge that you have the sermon to refer to in case of accidents, will, it is hoped, give you confidence enough to proceed without it. When you have done this several times, and find that there is no difficulty about it, you may then venture to try your wings without so much

support, and preach from the abstract only, without the sermon to refer to; and having become by this time tolerably fluent and confident, you will be able to supply from your own resources whatever has escaped your memory. Gradually your abstract may become shorter and shorter, until at last a few notes of some of the principal arguments will be sufficient to recall to your mind the subject of your discourse; and then you will have become what will be generally considered an accomplished extemporary preacher. A very fluent speaker assured me that he had learned to preach extempore by the foregoing plan. Recollect, I do not say you will be able to preach at all better in this way, than if you wrote your sermons down, and preached them in the ordinary manner. However, there is no harm in having the power; you may use it or not, as you like.

Indifferent, however, as you may be to extemporary preaching in your ordinary pulpit ministration, I do strongly advise you to get the faculty of *lecturing* or *expounding Scripture* extemporaneously, for you will find it very useful on many occasions, in the school-room and the cottage, if not in the pulpit. And, after all, I do not know whether you may not, in this way, learn to preach extempore, more easily, and satisfactorily, than by any of the other methods which I have suggested.[1]

POSTSCRIPT.

It is remarked, that Postscripts generally contain the most important matter in the letter. I cannot leave off with-

[1] See Letter XXV. [Vide note F, at the end: WRITTEN AND EXTEMPORARY SERMONS.]

out reminding you, in conclusion, that all the rules of rhetoric, unsanctified by the Holy Ghost, are worse than useless. The most eloquent sermon ever preached, if unaccompanied by the Spirit of Grace, is but "as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." My subject has led me, perhaps too exclusively, into mechanical details; and I may have seemed to attach too great importance to them. Yet I hope I have not lost sight of that principle, which, after all, is the most practically important, namely, the influence which the Divine Spirit must exercise, to render your most earnest preaching profitable. If, unfortunately, in my eagerness after less important matters, I may have appeared to wander from this great truth, let my last words remind you to "be instant in prayer" for God's blessing on your Christian labours. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." *If you forget all the rest, remember this.*

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES.

Note A.

MATTER OF PREACHING.

§ 1. *Preaching to be agreeable to Holy Scripture.*

We pass on now to the Matter of preaching: and here our first suggestion is, that preaching must be entirely agreeable to Holy Scripture. For "Holy Scripture," as our sixth Article affirms, "containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an Article of Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." And accordingly the candidate for priest's orders avows his persuasion, "that the Holy Scriptures contain sufficiently all doctrine required of necessity for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ;" and pledges his determination, by God's grace, "out of the said Scriptures to instruct the people committed to his charge, and to teach nothing as required of necessity to eternal salvation, but that which he shall be persuaded may be concluded and proved by the Scriptures." "Let every minister then be careful," as Bishop Taylor appositely exhorts, "that what he delivers be indeed the Word of God, that his sermon may be answerable to his text, for this is God's word; the other ought to be according to it; that although in itself it be but the word of man, yet by the purpose, truth, and signification of it, it may in a secondary sense be the Word of God."

But it is unhappily notorious, that Holy Scripture is in many points, by different professors of Christianity, differently understood. The United Church of England and Ireland has her own definite sentiments on these interpretations; and such her sentiments are

plainly recorded in her Liturgy and Articles. To these every minister of hers voluntarily subscribes his cordial approbation; and pledges himself, moreover, not only to take her interpretations as the guide of his faith, but also as the guide of his teaching; for according to the stipulation, to which we have had already several times occasion to refer, he pledges himself that, "by the help of the Lord, he will give his faithful diligence, always so to minister the doctrines and sacraments and the discipline of Christ, as the Lord hath commanded, and as this Church and Realm hath received the same, according to the commandments of God; so that he may teach the people committed to his cure and charge with all diligence to keep and observe the same."

The *Holy Scriptures* then, in the first place, and next the acknowledged *tenets of the Church*, not as opposed to or contradistinguished from the Scriptures, but as subordinate and auxiliary to them, and as interpreting and explaining them, deriving from them at the same time all their warranty, all their claim to be received and believed, are to be the rule of a clergyman's preaching.

Conforming his practice to this rule, his constant object will be the same as that which was the object of Almighty God in sending his Son into the world; namely, by means of that revelation of his love to bring mankind to a knowledge and confession of him, and to consequent holiness in this world, and happiness in a future world; according to that comprehensive view of the Gospel, exhibited by St. Paul to Titus, "The Grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." Thus the *doctrines* and the *precepts of the Gospel* will be incessantly pressed upon his people; not as two independent parts, but as parts mutually dependent upon and intimately connected with each other, of one great and harmonious system. He will regard them as standing to each other in the relation of foundation and superstructure, and will treat of them accordingly. If, for instance, he has laboured to establish a great Christian Truth, he will not there leave it, without application, but he will erect upon it the edifice of Christian holiness: for what is a foundation without a building? If he is anxious to enforce

a Christian precept, he will establish it mainly on the basis of Christian truth: for what will become of an edifice which is not founded on a rock? Thus, when he has been led to dwell on the essential doctrines of the Gospel, such as the Trinity and the Incarnation, he will make them occasions of setting forth the part of each of the Holy Three in the economy of man's salvation, and the exceeding great love of our Master and only Saviour Jesus Christ, for the purpose of quickening the hearer's gratitude towards his divine Benefactors, and his earnestness in their worship and service: if to dwell on the love due from man to man, he will press it principally from the consideration that we ought to love one another, because God for Christ's sake loved us.

But, again, it will be the preacher's endeavour to comprise *all* the truths of the Holy Volume, as far as possible, within the scope of his successive preaching, forasmuch as "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." With St. Paul he will so preach, as to be able to "take his hearers" to record, that he is pure from the blood of all men; for he has not shunned to declare unto them all the counsel of God." Knowing with St. James, that "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all," he will endeavour that any failure on the part of his people in keeping the whole law shall not be caused by a failure on his part in preaching it.

BISHOP MANT.

Take heed unto the doctrine.—That is, manifestly, adhere to the strict letter of Divine truth, to that form of sound words, once delivered to the saints, and for which the saints of old zealously contended. Be mindful that you are to deliver no doctrine of your own; but the doctrine of Holy Scripture, as it has been understood and interpreted by the consenting voice of all pious antiquity; by those true and faithful members of the Christian Church in all times, in all places, and even amidst the growth of adscititious error, to whom the greatest worthies of our own National Church invariably refer. This doctrine no well-instructed minister of the Church of England can be at a loss to determine. It is contained in those venerable formularies which our fathers retained, or derived from most remote antiquity; and it is supported throughout by most clear and

indisputable warrant of Holy Scripture. From hence must be drawn the whole scope and tenor of our public teaching. We must declare the attributes and perfections of one Almighty God, under the threefold distinction of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. We must preach the fallen condition of man; his restoration by the grace of Christ; the transforming efficacy of the Holy Spirit; the peace and joy which, even here, accompany a holy life; and the consummation of perfect, never-ending bliss, which awaits the pious in the life to come. These truths, connected with those grand yet familiarizing manifestations of Godhead which pervade both Testaments, appear to me to contain the essence of Christian preaching. Nor, from this statement, let it be imagined that variety and novelty are out of our power. It should be remembered, that the lights of Holy Scripture are infinitely diversified; that it includes most instructive history, most sublime poetry, most engaging narrative; predictions, which extend to the consummation of all things; miracles, which suspend our faculties in awful astonishment; precepts, infinitely excelling all that is written in all the volumes of all the philosophers; warnings, not more beneficial, if they are heeded, than they will be terrible if neglected; epistolary writings, which are a model of correct reasoning, of happy illustration, and of affectionate familiarity. And when it is soberly considered, that all this is contained in that wonderful book, the Bible, and that the Bible itself is but a text-Book, expanded by the ablest writers and the best men who have in all ages edified the Church—then let us honestly pronounce, whether Christian teachers have not a field of mental exertion which rather astonishes by its magnitude, than circumscribes by any rigorous and dispiriting limitation.

Bishop Jebb.

§ 2. *Holy Scripture to be constantly studied, as likewise Ancient Authors.*

As they [the Holy Scriptures] are the source from which all our doctrine is to be drawn, the touchstone to which all our teaching is to be referred, so should they be the perpetual scope of our pursuits, the perpetual companions of our thoughts. They form an ample treasure-house of learning: and they who have penetrated into it most deeply, and examined it most perfectly, are best aware how precious, how abundant, how inexhaustible are its stores. They deserve, as they demand, a large portion of a clergyman's time. It

were well, indeed, that the Exhortation in the Ordination Service were literally observed, which recommends "the *daily* reading and weighing the Scriptures:" it were well, I say, that every clergyman should hold it to be his duty, and accordingly establish it for his practice, not to permit a day to pass without reading a portion of the Bible, but to allot some part of every day to the study of God's Word. The exercise would doubtless enable him, by almost imperceptible degrees, to "wax riper and stronger in his ministry;" for, whilst it would habitually give to his thoughts a professional direction, it would qualify him more fully to discharge the duties of his profession as a "Scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven;" to lay up in his mind a fund of biblical information, and, like the householder, to bring forth out of his treasure, as occasions may require, "things new and old."

But in speaking of the study of the Holy Scriptures, I cannot forbear to recommend that such study be prosecuted as much as possible in the original languages. However excellent may be the translation of any author, and few translations of any authors can be mentioned which surpass or even rival the excellence of the authorized English Bible, still the translation will fail of exhibiting a full idea of the original. The principle applies to the Holy Scriptures in as high a degree at least as to other writings; perhaps in a higher degree than to most others. The knowledge derived to the student through the medium of the original languages is more clear, more profound, more complete, more satisfactory in every respect, more productive both of improvement and of delight. The power of reading the New Testament in the Original, it is to be presumed that all clergymen are possessed of: if that power were continually exercised by the daily reading of a chapter in the Greek, it would in a short time be greatly augmented; it would add by corresponding advances a large accession to the stock, previously acquired, of theological learning; and the result I am sure would be highly gratifying, as well as highly beneficial, to every clergyman, who enjoys those feelings which belong to his profession. An acquaintance with the original language of the Scriptures of the Old Testament is much less generally prevalent. I lament that it is so: and I think it much to be desired, that instruction in Hebrew should form a necessary part of education in our Universities, and a regular branch of examination in Candidates for the ministry of the Church. I am perfectly sensible that I am by no means qualified to express myself

in the character of a profound Hebrew scholar. But possibly upon that very account my present suggestion may come with a stronger practical recommendation. For thus much I am desirous of observing for the encouragement of any clergyman who may be willing to take this mode of fulfilling his ordination vow in the article now before us, and to study the Scriptures with all diligence in the way in which they may be most profitably studied, but who may at the same time be incapable of studying them in that way by reason of his actual ignorance of the Hebrew language, that there is not one member of our profession, at least among the younger members of our profession, who might not at no distant period attain that knowledge, with a very inconsiderable pecuniary expense, with no uncommon exercise of his faculties, and with no large sacrifice of his time; but eventually, I am persuaded, to the great increase of his enjoyments, and to the improvement and enrichment of his mind.

The Scriptures, however, in whatever way they be studied, whether in their original or their translated form, are to be the primary and chief scope of a clergyman's attention. And next to, and together with the Scriptures, "*such studies as help to the knowledge of the same.*" For, let it not be supposed that the Bible is a book with which a man can become properly acquainted, so at least as to be a competent teacher and interpreter of it, without much collateral and subsidiary study. Every clergyman is doubtless well aware of the various circumstances belonging to those invaluable writings, which are obstructions in our study of them; he is aware of the different ages, characters, situations, and numerous peculiarities of their respective authors; of the conditions of the several persons to whom they were originally addressed, or for whom they were more immediately written; of the remote and varying periods of their composition; of the languages in which they were composed, of the many natural phenomena, the manners, and the civil and religious institutions of the countries to which they relate; of the occasions which severally called for them; of the nature of their subjects; the modes of their execution; in a word, of all the numerous and diversified particulars which I presume to be familiar to the minds of those who are bound by their professional engagement to be "diligent in reading the Holy Scriptures, and in such studies as help to the knowledge of the same:" and, being well aware of all these things, he must doubtless be well aware that the Bible abounds in difficulties, which, as they are calculated to be an impediment in the

path of the unlearned reader, so give occasion for us to be diligent in applying all the means that we can command, in order to their explanation and removal. "It is certain," remarks Bishop Bull, in his companion for the candidates of Holy Orders, "that rightly to understand the Holy Scriptures is a very difficult thing, especially for us who live at so great a distance from those times wherein they were written, and those persons and churches to whom they were directed. It is no slender measure of the knowledge of antiquity, history, philology, that is requisite to qualify a man for such an undertaking. They know nothing of the Holy Scriptures, that know not this. And therefore those unlearned and ignorant men, that venture on the exposition of Scripture, being perfect strangers to these parts of learning, must of necessity wrest them to their own and their hearers' destruction."

This censure of the learned Prelate is especially directed against those self-constituted teachers, who, without a right understanding of the Sacred Scriptures, "will venture on the expounding of these mysterious Books." But the censure is equally applicable to us, who are duly constituted teachers, if we will not sedulously endeavour to qualify ourselves to teach: and surely it is as dangerous both to us and to our people, as it is unworthy and disgraceful in ourselves, if we will not by diligent attention to the studies of our profession endeavour to redeem the pledge, upon the faith of which we are admitted to the station which we hold in it.

So important a part is this in a clergyman's obligations, that it were well that every candidate for Holy Orders should be instructed to consider the possession of a certain biblical apparatus as a necessary part of his provision for the Ministry: it were well, also, that every clergyman should spare some portion, however slender, from his income, for supplying himself with such an apparatus. Theological works, especially the works of commentators on holy writ, of expositors of the grounds of natural and revealed religion, of practical and casuistical divines, and of defenders of our most scriptural Church, in her formularies of devotion, in her rites and ceremonies, in her confession of faith, and in her ecclesiastical polity; these are the tools of our profession. Such, that I may transiently specify a few, are the commentaries of Patrick, and Kidder, and Lowth, and Pocock, and Whitby, and Hammond, and Burkitt; the historical treatises of Shuckford, and Prideaux, Jones's Inquiry into the Canon of the New Testament, and the geographical work of

Wells; the Sermons of Andrewes, Hall, Mede, and Sanderson, of Barrow, South, and Beveridge, of Wilson, Tillotson, and Sharp; the argumentative treatises of Jackson, Stillingfleet, and Butler, Allis, Chandler, Sherlock, and Leslie; whose "discussion of the Socinian controversy," as well as his Dialogues on the truth of revealed religion and of Christianity in particular, are admirably adapted to these days of latitudinarian profession and avowed unbelief: the tracts and discourses of the several authors collected in the three volumes of the "Boyle Lectures," in the "Preservative against Popery," and in the "London Cases;" and the various compositions, on different Liturgical and ecclesiastical matters, of Comber, Sparrow, Nicholls, Bennett, Bisse, and Wheatly; of Pearson, Bull, and Waterland; of Nelson and Stanhope; of Wall; of Wake and Secker; of Burnett and Welchman; of Bingham; of Potter; of the learned and judicious Hooker; and of the no less learned and eloquent Jeremy Taylor. I have thus mentioned the names of a few theological writers, as samples of the works of which every clergyman ought to be possessed, in order that they may be the frequent subjects of his studies. I have limited myself to those of our own country, as being in general not difficult of attainment, and as falling most naturally within the compass of our familiar reading. I have also limited myself to those which adorned the seventeenth and the former part of the eighteenth century; concerning the earlier of which periods our late venerable Sovereign remarked, with a happy adaptation of Scriptural phraseology to the champions of religion and of the Anglican Church, that "there were giants in the earth in those days." Works such as these are, as I said, the tools of our profession, as the Holy Scriptures themselves are our materials. It is by their means that we may be enabled to prove ourselves "workmen that need not be ashamed; rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Tim. ii. 13.) But without possessing, and without employing such means as these, we can hardly have the satisfaction of a good conscience in believing that we have "done the work of an evangelist, and made full proof of our ministry." (2 Tim. iv. 5.)

An anecdote is told of the great Archbishop Ussher on his deathbed, which may be judged not inapplicable to our present purpose. "The last words he was heard to utter, not long before he died, in praying for forgiveness of sins, were these, 'But, Lord, in special, forgive my sins of omission.' "In the general," observes his friend and biographer, Dr. Bernard, "he had his wish, which I have often

heard him make, that he might die crying for mercy and forgiveness. But *omission* was it; and yet a person that never was known to omit an hour, but ever employed in his Master's business, either writing, reading, or (as of late) others reading to him; ever either resolving of doubts, or exhorting, instructing, giving good and holy counsel to such as came to visit him; yet with this humble expression this holy man of God expired, 'this Daniel, greatly beloved.' A speech which may be a lesson to us all, and give us to our last hour matter of solemn meditation and imitation."

I will add no more on this point than the admonition of Bishop Bull, addressed by that learned Prelate in the first place to "Candidates for Holy Orders," but equally applicable to all who have been admitted to any order in the Church, and such as will be most highly prized by those who are most conversant with the duties of their profession. "Be diligent, very diligent in the business of your calling: for it is a laborious calling, that will not admit of ease and idleness. I speak especially to the younger clergy: ply your studies, give yourselves to reading, chiefly the Holy Scriptures, and the writings of learned men that have explained them to you. The exhortations of St. Paul to Timothy are full to this purpose. 'Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine; meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear unto all.' Consider, I beseech you, what kind of person he was whom St. Paul thus exhorts: he was one who from a child knew the Holy Scriptures; one that had the gift of Prophecy, and was endued with extraordinary and even miraculous gifts. This man St. Paul earnestly calls upon to be diligent in reading and study; what need then have we, even the best of us, of this diligence, who are so very far short of his accomplishments! In a word, an idle person in any calling whatsoever is very contemptible: but an idle and lazy parochial priest is of all mortals the most contemptible and inexcusable. What! so much business, and that of so great importance as the salvation of men's souls, and yet idle? For the Lord's sake shake off sloth, rouse up and bestir yourselves in the business of your calling, remembering that the souls of your people and your own souls are at stake."

Bishop Mant.

Having now obtained a sufficient knowledge of Holy Scripture, you will be ready to proceed to the study of the Fathers. You will

begin with those which are termed apostolical, taking up the epistle of Clement, the seven epistles of Ignatius in their shorter, which is their genuine form, and the epistle of Polycarp. Then you may proceed to the first Apology of Justin Martyr, which will give you a great insight into Christian antiquity; and this you may follow up with Tertullian's splendid Apology. From these two works alone you will gain more sterling information than from all the ecclesiastical histories that have ever been written. Another work of Tertullian's may next be taken up, namely, his book De Praescriptione Hæreticorum, which will supply you with a fund of original information on the subject of the early heresies. While you are thus in the African schools, you may go on and read Cyprian de Unitate Ecclesiæ, and his tracts de Lapsis, and De Opere et Eleemosynis, which will give you some notion of the government and discipline of the early Church. After these you may proceed to take a taste of the mighty but whimsical Alexandrine school. The beautiful little treatise of Clement on the Salvation of the Rich Man, and of Origen on Prayer, will afford you a specimen of the singular mode of interpretation which that school adopted, and long perpetuated through its influence. You may now take up Eusebius's Ecclesiastical History, the great value of which consists in numerous fragments of earlier writers. And you will find a great relief, from the tortuous Greek of this writer and of the Alexandrine school, in the exquisitely beautiful and flowing language of Chrysostom, whose book De Sacerdotio, though containing many impertinences, cannot be read without most salutary emotion, by a minister of Christ's holy word and sacraments.

This is but a short course, such as may be gone through without any difficulty in a few months; but you will find it supply you with a fund of original knowledge, which, while it has given you a commanding view of the field of ecclesiastical study, so that you will know how to proceed further of yourself, will also stimulate you to go on to satisfy the ardent curiosity which it will have raised. The books also have been edited singly, (with one or two exceptions,) and are therefore more easily procured. Do not, therefore, neglect ground so important. It is absolutely necessary that a certain portion of our clergy, if not all, should have some acquaintance with the writings of the Fathers, continually referred to them as we are, by the fact of our Church being also their Church, transmitted from distant ages and foreign lands; nor is there any other way of dispelling

those unfounded prejudices, and that violent party-spirit, which possess all men who take their knowledge on this subject at second-hand. Their evils, in both extremes, are sensibly felt among us at this day; and we need nothing more to warn us that slippery, if not demoralizing, as the effects of obtaining second-hand knowledge always necessarily are, preferring as men thus do show to substance, they are trifling compared with their pernicious result in matters of sacred literature. Men may talk as long and as much as they will, of the inexpressibly superior importance of the study of Scripture; and just as long and as loudly may they talk of the overwhelming importance of the written word compared with that of the human ministry of its expositor. Who denies it? Yet no man can be acknowledged a master of Scripture without acquaintance with the Fathers; not because their comment is of any superior value, but on account of the testimony which they bear, of the illustration which the language of their writings and the facts of their times supply; and because we can no more know a book without a knowledge of its predecessors and successors, than we can comprehend any era of history without a knowledge of its past and future. If the Old Testament, therefore, should be studied as a predecessor, can we reasonably remain ignorant of the Fathers, who are successors, uninspired though they be? REV. ROBERT WILSON EVANS.

§ 3. *The Distinctive Principles of the Church to be Preached.*

I confess that I am much inclined to an opinion, that we, namely, the Clergy in general of the United Church of England and Ireland, have been wanting to ourselves, to our congregations, and to the Church, in not bringing subjects of this description so prominently forward in our parochial instructions, as they may seem to merit at our hands. I would not speak disrespectfully myself, nor would I wish that any of my brethren in the ministry of that Church should speak disrespectfully of other professors of Christianity, who are not so happy in an ecclesiastical polity, and in the several matters connected with it, as I esteem the members of our most favoured Church. Let not, therefore, I entreat the reader, any thing which I may now throw out for his consideration, be construed into an uncharitable reflection upon other religious societies. But believing, as I do, that our form of Church government is of apostolical, and so of divine original; that our principle of liturgical worship, excellent in itself, is also of Scriptural antiquity, and sanctioned by the countenance and

example of the Son of God ; that our Liturgy, derived in part from very early ages, probably from the primitive age of Christianity, and purified from intermediate corruptions, and reformed and enlarged with the most scrupulous regard to Holy Writ, is actually and altogether agreeable to the recorded revelations of the Spirit of God ; and that the several provisions of our Liturgy, whether in matter, order, or form, are both exempt from all reasonable objection, and excellently calculated to promote the glory of God and the edification of those who faithfully participate in its services :—it does appear to me desirable, that our congregations should be instructed in these things, and so be taught and encouraged to estimate duly the spiritual blessings which, by the bounty of Providence, they enjoy.

It does, I say, appear to me desirable for our people to be taught that, from the time of the Apostles, and by their own immediate appointment, the Episcopal form of Church government, and the three orders of the ministry, namely, Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, did exist in the Church of Christ ; that they were preserved throughout the whole of Christendom for fifteen hundred years, till the age of the Reformation ; that at that period, when some other countries saw good, or were constrained, to set up for themselves a different form, it pleased Almighty God, in his great mercy, to enable and encourage the Protestant people of England and Ireland to retain, and through successive times of difficulty and danger, still to preserve and uphold the form of Apostolical institution ; and that the same form under which we now, as a Church, exist, is to be referred to the will and dispensation of God, and is acceptable and well-pleasing in his sight.

Again, it seems desirable for our people to be taught that a Liturgy, or set and prescribed form of public worship, is recommended by many inherent advantages : such as its being most easily comprehended, and most heartily followed, by the people ; its being the best security for order and decency in public ministrations ; and the most complete safeguard for a pure profession of faith, and against the irruption of false and erroneous opinions ; that such forms of worship did prevail in the Jewish Church ; that it was the custom of our blessed Saviour to partake in them ; that he has left us an example and a justification of them in his own prescribed form of prayer ; and that they were in use with the first teachers and professors of his religion.

It seems desirable, again, for our people to be taught that the Liturgy, which at this time constitutes the form of public worship in the National Church, is, in some of its parts, either substantially or ver-

bally, of the highest antiquity; that when, during the dark ages of the Romish domination, perversions and corruptions of Christian doctrine had found their way into the liturgical provisions of the Churches of Europe, it became the anxious care of our Reformers to purge from the then existing forms all such perversions and corruptions; to banish every thing that was evil, to retain whatever was unexceptionable and good, to make additions of corresponding excellence, and to remodel the whole upon the soundest principles and after the holiest examples; and that, in consequence, the Liturgy which we now possess breathes the very spirit and essence of Christianity, very frequently expressed in the exact phrases, continually conformed to the phraseology, uniformly conveying the sentiments of Holy Writ; so that we deem there is no presumption in believing that the holy men who compiled and composed it, were actuated in their work and labour of love by the Holy Spirit of God.

It seems desirable, lastly, for our people to be taught how excellent are the several provisions and arrangements of our Liturgy, and what are the reasons, the meaning, and the uses of its component parts:—especially what are the different offices which belong to them in the progress of the public worship; what a high privilege they enjoy above Christians in general of other communions, as members of the Protestant National Church, in the appropriation to them of these offices; and how much it is their duty to maintain an early, punctual, and constant, a reasonable and attentive, a decent and devout participation in the services, to observe the postures which become them in the different parts of the service, and to unite in the several portions allotted to them, vocally as well as mentally, in compliance with the express injunctions of the Church.

These things, it appears to me desirable for our people to be taught: and it is desirable for them to be taught, moreover, that living as they do, under such a form of Church government, and with the blessings of such a Liturgy, which, together with the most holy worship, imparts to them the pure faith, the entire unadulterated word, and the genuine sacraments of Christ, it is not matter of indifference or of choice whether or not they will avail themselves of these advantages; but that it is according to the will of God, and an affair of conscientious obligation, that they should steadfastly and exclusively hold communion with this Church, in the ministration of her duly constituted pastors, and in the use of her Scriptural forms of prayer, and in those particular places, withal, and under those

particular ministers, which the Church, under the providence of God, has appointed for the particular edification of each of her several members.

Thus may our people come to some knowledge of the character, and the grounds, and the importance of Church communion, of which, it is to be feared, they are at present, for the most part, greatly ignorant; they may learn to form a due estimate of the value of the Church, as an Apostolical and Scriptural institution, and may constantly communicate with her after the manner which she herself ordains; not induced by the mere accidental circumstance of birth, or habit, or fashion, or a capricious taste, or "an itching ear," drawing them away hither and thither after some favourite preacher; but loving the Church for her own sake, for the sake of themselves, for the sake of her divine Author and Founder, as "the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth," and as the means whereby they may continue in "the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship," in the sacraments which the Apostles ministered, and in the mode of worship which they celebrated; and may thus be blessed with the spiritual presence of Him who promised that he would be with his Apostles, and so with their rightly delegated successors, "always, even unto the end of the world."

BISHOP MANT.

I would also advise you to instruct your parishioners, among other things, from some proper text or texts, in the daily and occasional services of the Church: not with a view to extol either immoderately, much less to provoke wrath against those who dissent from us; but mildly to answer unjust imputations upon our Liturgy, and chiefly to show the meaning, the reasons, the uses of each part: that your congregations may, as the Apostle expresses it, *pray with the understanding*. (1 Cor. xiv. 15.) In all compositions there will be some things, which to some persons want explaining; and, were the whole ever so clear, men are strangely apt both to hear and to speak words, that are become familiar to them, with scarce any attention to their sense. And so, by degrees, a bodily attendance and worship become all that they pay; and they return home almost as little edified, as they would by devotions in a tongue unknown. Convincing them of this fault, and assisting them to amend it, must greatly conribute to the promotion of true piety among them.

ARCHBISHOP SECKER.

§ 4. *Preaching to be adapted to the circumstances and condition of the People.*

Can it be questioned, that he who, by wise and pious reading, by frequent meditation, and, above all, by fervent prayer, has imbibed the spirit of the sacred records, will distribute, with prudence and propriety, to each hearer his suitable portion of instruction? Of this wise and judicious management, our blessed Lord has left us the most edifying example. Throughout his divine teaching, we observe the most exquisite adaptation to the circumstances, habits, peculiarities, prejudices, and dispositions, of those whom he addressed. In the discourses, also, of St. Paul, we discover the most discriminative attention to every variation of place, and person, and religious faith. At Athens, the most philosophic and cultivated people in the world are addressed with an appeal to the authority of their own sages and poets. At Lystra, whose uneducated inhabitants were more accessible to a direct appeal to the senses, than to any abstract deductions of philosophic truth, he refers to the rain from heaven, and to the fruitful seasons, that fill our hearts with food and gladness. Before Felix, an unjust, luxurious, adulterous heathen, he urges the most awakening topics of natural religion; he reasons of righteousness, and temperance, and judgment to come. To Agrippa, a zealous, well-instructed Jew, expert in all customs and questions among the Jews, he opens at large those great and glorious events, to which all the law and the prophets bear witness. In a word, to the Jews he became a Jew, that he might gain the Jews; to them that were without law, he became as without law, that he might gain them that were without law; to the weak, he became as weak, that he might gain the weak: he was all things to all men, that he might by all means save some.

This judicious management it is our bounden duty to study, for the edification of those committed to our charge. To weak Christians, or, as they are styled in Scripture, to babes in Christ, we must offer the milk of the Word—the first principles of the doctrine of Christ. To more advanced Christians, to young men and fathers, we must give strong meat—endeavouring to lead them on to perfection. We must have respect to every distinction of age, of character, of information, and of habit; and, like scribes truly instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, we must, as occasion shall require, bring forth from our treasure things new and old.

Bishop Jebb.

But a fervent desire of being useful will teach you more than any particular directions can, upon every head. Without this desire, you will either be negligent, or, if you would seem zealous, you will be detected for want of uniformity and perseverance. Therefore make sure, first, that all be right within, and *out of the good treasure of the heart you will bring forth good things*, (St. Matt. xii. 35,) naturally and prudently, and, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, effectually. It is not easy, indeed, even to instruct the willing, much less to convince the unwilling, and reform the wicked. But still, these are the purposes for which we are God's ambassadors: and we must try, with indefatigable perseverance, every way to execute our commission. We must study human nature in our own breasts, and those of others; we must acquaint ourselves, by all innocent means, with the opinions and practices of the world, especially of our hearers, that we may lay their hearts and lives open to their view, and make them feel what we say. We must consider all the while we compose, and reconsider as we preach, and afterwards—"Is this adapted suffi-"ciently to the capacities, the state of mind, the circumstances of "the poor people who are to hear it? Will this part be clear, that "home enough, a third well guarded against mistakes? Will they go "back as much better disposed than they came, as it is in our power "to make them?"

Perhaps one or more ways of representing a necessary doctrine or duty have failed: we must think whether a more likely may not be found, or a less likely in appearance, prove more successful.

ARCHBISHOP SECKER.

NOTE B.

SERMONS TO BE PLAIN.

A PLAIN sermon is one which is suitable to the apprehension of plain minds, that is, minds which have been slightly, if at all educated, and little accustomed to reflection. Now there cannot be a greater mistake than to suppose that metaphor lies out of the way of such minds. On the contrary, it forms the staple of their language, especially whenever they rise to higher matters, because they go by analogy instead of deduction, and are in possession of few general

terms. The case was just the reverse with the educated ranks of the last century, who were so much given to general reasoning that they abandoned the field of imagination. Hence their gross mistake; a plain sermon, therefore, instead of discarding metaphor, must employ it as necessary, and instead of using argument as necessary, must discard it as quite unsuitable to the purpose. You have most probably gone beyond the depth of most of your congregation when you have descended two steps in argument. You must, therefore, substitute analogy. A happy illustration of this kind will produce full and immediate conviction, where the strongest argument would not have been appreciated. Have you never observed that, if they would give you the reason of any thing, they always have recourse to analogy. They put salt into their beer to break it; they wish for rain that it may bring down the cold. In a plain sermon, therefore, while the subject is treated as methodically as in any other, (for do not suppose that a proper connexion of its parts is not felt, however unconsciously,) for argument you have recourse to illustration; for formal statement to earnest appeal, and forcible interrogation; and for the long-tailed general terms of Latin derivation, you substitute such as you can find in the more elementary and vernacular portion of our language. To an educated mind, especially if it have but lately issued forth from the cloisters of learning, this is no easy task, though surely no unpleasing one. For as the outward man is pleased with the pastoral simplicity of the scenery of the country, so is the inward man with the simplicity of thoughts and language of the countryman. But it will never be successfully accomplished, except by one who has come close to the hearts and minds, and so to the modes of thinking of his flock, by constant, systematic visitation, and accustomed himself through conversation with the healthy, through exhortation of the sick, through instruction in lecture, to turn himself round with ease, and even grace, within their narrow range of language. Even then it requires the continual exercise of the imagination to invent apposite illustrations, and to hit upon a metaphor which shall save a long statement, or supersede the use of general terms. But the grand source of all is the study of the Bible. That is not only the fountain of pure doctrine, but also the storehouse of imagery from which, or according to which, you will form your figurative language, taking especial care that whatever comes from yourself be in perfect keeping with the sacred cast of that authority, so that your sermon may not admit of being compared to a set of

modern smartly dressed gentlemen mixed with the grave and reverend personages of priests and prophets. And that, in the English translation, is also the fountain of the pure and vernacular idiom which you are to employ. Such study as this, within doors, and your regular visitation without doors, are the only effective means of learning to write a plain sermon.

It will now perhaps appear to you, that to write a plain sermon is not the easy task which it may be commonly supposed to be. It requires a power and flexibility of mind which is not to be found everywhere, as also a quick perception of the qualities of the class with which you have to deal. Indeed, it may be said, without much risk of error, that for one who can write such a sermon there are at least a hundred who cannot, though they may succeed to admiration in such as are suitable to the middling and higher classes. And even these classes are always found to prefer a plain sermon, when they can have it. For it speaks a universal language, and is felt by high and low. To the high it comes with the same ministration of freshness and delight, as do their green parks and lawns on their return from the artificial and formal scenes of the town. It is in unison with all around them, even within the sacred building. And the serious amongst them, and indeed not the serious only, but the considerate and benevolent also, experience great satisfaction in hearing that which, while it instructs themselves, instructs also the very poorest and most ignorant brother amongst them. Then they feel indeed in the sermon, no less than in the prayers, that they are all met together in Christ's name, as children of a common Father.

There prevail, however, some notions on the subject of plain language which seem to require correction. There is at present a great talk about Saxon-English. The term itself is erroneous; as well might we talk about Latin-French. No wonder, then, that the notion which it is meant to convey should be wrong. This is, that he who would be well understood by the poor should employ as his staple such words as are of Saxon root. Now this is quite untrue; for instance, we may have two equivalent phrases in our language, neither of which shall mainly consist of words of Saxon root, and yet the one shall be plain and vernacular, the other foreign and hard to be understood. Thus there is the abominable vulgarity of the English of the newspapers in the phrase, "It will infallibly be productive of most beneficial consequences." And there is the idiomatic plain phrase: "It will not fail to produce most excellent

fruit;" in which all the words, not merely auxiliary, are French, and not Saxon And is this a whit less plain than the pure English: "It cannot but yield a very good harvest?" Norman-English would be a much more suitable term.

Nor is it true that words are not plain, simply because they are of foreign derivation. The primary cause is, that they are general terms; that these general terms should have been supplied from a foreign language is merely accidental, being owing to the long degradation of our language to the exclusive use of the lower classes by the Norman conquest, no less than to the exclusive use of the Latin by writers. For that part of any language which consists of general terms is little used, and therefore imperfectly understood by the vulgar. This may be illustrated by the use of our word "imagination." Use it in the sense in which it occurs in Rom. i. 21—"They became vain in their imaginations"—and the most ignorant will understand you. But use it in the abstract sense of a faculty of the mind, as in the words, "Imagination presents to our view,"—and you have probably gone out of sight of all their imaginations. Let not, therefore, Latin words be a bugbear, nor indulge in the pedantry of scraping together all that you can of words of Saxon root. Pedantry is always unintelligible, if not ridiculous, to the common people. But avoid general terms, and generalizing phrases, as much as possible. The latter indeed may always be dispensed with.

But there is another kind of affectation in words, of a much more serious nature, which you should never be led into. That is, the usage of new-fangled words, such as "prayerful," which have been added by some to our religious phraseology. The progress of controversy will indeed, by bringing out new distinctions, give birth to new terms. But these, having no such origin, have no excuse, and your employment of them will denote bad taste in you as a scholar, who should be the last to violate the purity of his native tongue. And if you will but consider the point, you will not find it to be a token of very proper feeling in you as a Christian. For is it not in reality, as much as to hint, that all who have not used those terms, our fathers and forefathers, have died destitute of those holy feelings which they are intended to imply, and that all who do not use them are void of religious seriousness? Can you wonder that ignorant people should come to this understanding, and bandy them as party terms, expressing the criterion of a faithful and unfaithful Christian? And what a shocking corruption is this! How is it to be distin-

guished from those outward and formal tests which the superstitious Romanist applies to the discernment of the true servants of God? Away then with such objectionable novelties, such uncharitable barbarisms.

But go to the pure well of English undefiled—go to our English Bible. There high and low find a common language. And merciful indeed was the Lord's providence in furnishing us with this standard of communication. For so compounded is our language of two distinct parts, which you may translate from one into the other, that there must have arisen a distinct language for rich and poor, and a formidable bar to the moral and spiritual improvement of the latter, had not this version intervened at a happy moment, when the language had attained sufficient extent and power, and when as yet its compound character had not so increased as to disclose a fracture which should leave the tongue of the rich on one side, and that of the poor on the other. Draw, then, from this well the living water of pure English. Imbue your style with its phraseology, and do not flatter yourself that you have accomplished the work when you have made your sermon a patchwork of your own observations interwoven with scriptural texts. The whole texture of it should have a scriptural cast.

Of all things disgusting to good taste, not the least is a sermon of washy, generalizing, newspaper English, with a text or two of Scripture floating in it. You will be put in mind by it of what you often see in a farm-yard, where stands a trough of washy liquor, in which are floating, here and there, a substantial cabbage or turnip-top, while in the next field are sheep feeding on turnips. Now you are to be a feeder of sheep, and not of swine.

Rev. Robert Wilson Evans.

Note C.

texts.

Among the rules laid down by the best writers on the subject, for the choice of Texts, the following are the most important:

1. The text should have a complete sense in itself, and include the complete sense of the writer.

2. A text which appears odd, or the choice of which vanity may be supposed to dictate, is to be rejected.

3. A text should not be chosen as the mere motto of a sermon.

4. Another quality in the choice of a text is simplicity.

This is violated when a text requires a long critical commentary to prepare the way for the subject; and likewise when it promises great efforts in the preacher.

On this subject the student may consult Dr. Porter's 4th Lecture.

It may be here added, by the way, that the various selections from Holy Scripture, appointed for the Proper Lessons, and for the Epistle and Gospel of the day, as they are very convenient guides to the preacher in his choice of subjects when not engaged in a continued course of systematic instruction, so may they be recommended for his guidance, as coinciding with, and calculated to render more edifying, the provisions of the Church, and as testifying respect for her authority: at the same time they will naturally lead him to a successive consideration of the principal contents of the Sacred Volume; such as the most prominent events and characters in the Patriarchal and Israelitish histories; the Mosaical law, its nature, its uses, and its imperfections; the awful denunciations of the prophets on the sinfulness of the chosen people, and their anticipations of righteousness, peace, and glory under the promised Messiah; the life and ministry, the parables, discourses, and miracles, of our Lord; and the acts, sufferings, and writings of his Apostles, for the establishment and edification of the infant Church. BISHOP MANT.

NOTE D.

UNITY.

THERE is a kind of unity in a sermon, which indeed is in no danger of distracting the attention of hearers, by the multiplicity of objects presented. It consists in a constant recurrence of the same thought, attenuated and repeated with undeviating uniformity. The hearers pass on with the preacher, not from one branch of the discourse to another, delighted with the richness of matter and variety of illustration, but from one topic, presented again, with some trifling changes of representation. The above sort of taste, indeed, does not

always deign, in this last particular, to humour the caprice of hearers. It gives them over and over the same favourite thoughts, in the same favourite expressions; and often very consistently completes its claim to their attention, by a favourite monotony in delivery. Nor is this sameness limited to a single discourse of the preacher;—it extends, perhaps, through the whole range of his instructions; so that whatever reason the hearers may have to expect a new text, they have the advantage of foreseeing essentially what the sermon will be, from Sabbath to Sabbath. Now, if this is the indispensable quality in sermons which we call unity, it is one, as all will agree, in which it is the province of dullness to excel. But to suppose that our hearers are benefited by such a sameness, in the pulpit, is to suppose that when they enter a place of worship, they cease to be men. Correct views on this subject are to be acquired only by studying the human mind in its general operations. That acute and able writer, the late Professor Brown, in analyzing the philosophy of emotions, has the following remarks, which I quote with pleasure, as strengthening the illustrations already given:—

"Even objects that originally excited the highest interest, if long continued, cease to interest, and soon become painful. Who, that is not absolutely deaf, could sit for a whole day, in a music room, if the same air without variation, were begun again in the very instant of its last note? The most beautiful couplet of the most beautiful poem, if repeated to us without intermission, for a very few minutes, would excite more uneasiness than could have been felt from the single recitation of the dullest stanza of the most soporific inditer of rhymes. How weary are we of many of the lines of our best poets, which are quoted to us forever by those who read only what others quote. What we admired, when we read it first, fatigues and disappoints us when we meet with it so often; and the author appears to us almost trite and common in his most original images, merely because these images are so very beautiful as to have become some of the common-places of rhetorical selection.

"Notwithstanding our certainty that a road without one turn must lead us to our journey's end, it would be to our mind, and thus indirectly to our body also, which is soon weary when the mind is weary, the most fatiguing of all roads.

"A very long avenue is sufficiently wearying, even when we see the house that is at the end of it. But what patience could travel for a whole day along one endless avenue, with perfect parallelism

of the two straight lines, and with trees of the same species and height succeeding each other exactly at the same intervals? In a journey like this, there would be the same comfort in being blind as there would be in a little temporary deafness, in the case before imagined of the same unvaried melody endlessly repeated in the music room. The uniformity of similar trees, at similar distances, would itself be most wearisome. But what we should feel with far more uneasiness, would be the constant disappointment of our expectation, that the last tree, which we beheld in the distance, would be the last that would rise upon us; when tree after tree, as in mockery of our patience itself, would still present the same dismal continuity of line."

I need not be more particular in applying these illustrations. As men are constituted, they demand variety in intellectual subjects as well as in material. And the preacher of good sense will never be anxious to attain that unity in his public instructions, which excludes a proper variety.

What then is the unity so important to be observed in the composition of a sermon?

This question Dr. Porter proceeds to answer at length, under the following heads. The whole lecture is worthy of the careful perusal of the student.

I answer, it requires that the sermon should be—

In the first place, ONE IN SUBJECT.

In the second place, it should be ONE IN DESIGN.

In the third place, it should be ONE IN THE ADJUSTMENT OF ITS PARTS TO THE PRINCIPAL END, AND TO EACH OTHER.

In the fourth place, there should be UNITY OF ILLUSTRATION.

Such is that unity which is worthy to be sought in the pulpit. It is not a sterile sameness; but it requires that a sermon should be one in subject, one in design, one in the adaptation of its parts to each other, and to the common effect, and one in illustration. Of course, unity does not forbid divisions; it only requires that these should not exhibit several distinct subjects, but only that they should present several parts of the same subject, as one complete whole. Against such a fault as that just alluded to, it will be our business to guard still farther in considering the characteristics of a perfect division.

DR. PORTER.

In composing, the preacher must be very careful to keep to his

subject. This rule, although it seems very obvious, is perpetually neglected. For every branch and topic of theology is so comprehensive, and all have so many points of contact with each other, that it is very easy to pass from one to another at all times. If, then, any difficulty occurs on one line, another is immediately presented in the room of it, or an excursive fancy, which likes to follow any sudden thought into distant consequences, perpetually tempts one to digress; or any strong or favourite set of opinions or feelings leads the thoughts insensibly to the accustomed channel; or, perhaps even more than all, a settled dislike of any system or party instinctively moulds every argument into a shape of opposition against this. These and other causes combine to make men forget this rule. Sometimes it is owing to want of skill and experience only: as, when a novice, anxious to do all that he can, draws deeply on his stock of knowledge, and mixes up something of almost every subject that he is master of. The effect of this is, that a man after it is in the state which a young preacher once described, when he came down for the first time from the University pulpit; he said he felt as if he had "preached away all his Divinity." There never can be any occasion for this want of arrangement; for every subject which the preacher can take from Holy Writ, is, for his purpose, really inexhaustible, if he knows how to draw it out and apply it; but in order to do this, he must confine himself strictly to the subject, and work it out by thought and study; not by suffering his mind to ramble over the whole field of doctrines and precepts. A diffuse and vague method can never be profitable preaching: it may interest some persons, while it is new to them, but after a while the preacher is likely to fall into the same track of general topics again, with small edification to his hearers. The "workman that needeth not to be ashamed," must "rightly divide the word;" and the well instructed scribe must, like the householder, "bring forth out of his treasure things new and old," as occasion may require. It is especially incumbent on young preachers to think of this, because they have many temptations to spare themselves the labour of this strict method; and yet, if they give way, and fall into a loose habit of composing, they may never be able to correct it, or at least, not without great pains and loss.

The study of our early English Divines is one method to prevent falling into a rambling way of composing. In them, the divisions made for the sake of analyzing and exhausting the subject, are

sometimes too precise, at least for the taste of the present time. But no one who had been used to observe how Barrow, for instance, grapples with a text, to what a depth he sounds it, and how minutely he sifts it, could readily allow himself in a shallow off-hand style, disposing of whole subjects at once, each in a single proposition. But this head, the use to be made of our English Fathers, demands a few words more. We are speaking of them now as models of composition for the young preacher only; and therefore need not consider the many other reasons why they ought to be studied. We ought, indeed, to go to them as pupils to their masters, for the sake of the vast stores of biblical knowledge which we shall draw from them—for the deep and genuine piety, and the self-discipline which we cannot but learn from their writings in general: but regarding them as preachers only, they will be of the greatest value to the student. It is not indeed advisable to a young preacher to set about to form his style on the model of any man, nor to train himself (as rhetoricians have directed) by copying closely from some great master; and certainly it would not be possible now to imitate any of the old writers so closely. But all of our English Fathers have some great excellence, which deserve to be studied as examples, and our endeavour should be to imbibe the feeling and power of each in that point in which he excelled, if possible; and it might be hoped that the effect of a wide acquaintance with them would be, that we should derive from them some of their sterling good qualities, without any affected imitation of their mere manner. If we had set out with the design of copying any one person in our preaching, no doubt it would be more tolerated by any hearers, that we should occupy a modern than an old Divine, because the manner of the latter would be quite obsolete; but if our object be to catch their spirit rather than to imitate their letter—to inherit their mantle, not to mimic their gait and gesture—the case is quite changed; and without disparaging the works of later writers, surely there cannot reasonably be a doubt, that a student would gain more in power to compose from the study of those of our Divines who flourished from the Reformation down to the revolution, with all their roughness and *archaisms*, than he would by reading the more polished works of later times. It would exceed our limits to work out these hints. Let it only be added on this point, that every one would at once perceive in each of the old writers alluded to, a distinct character or quality for his instruction; as, for instance, in Latimer or Hopper, he would see simple earnest-

ness; in Taylor, fancy and feeling, and an inexhaustible flow of eloquence; in Andrewes or Hall, fervent piety; in Sanderson, clear practical expositions; in Barrow, an endless fund of learning; in Pearson, unerring precision of statement; in all these, a familiarity with Scripture, as if it were engrained into the very constitution of their minds. All of these, then, in turn, and others in the same way, would impart something of their own quality to the student's mind; and so, from the study of all, he would approach towards general excellence. But attempting to keep close to the subject must not mislead into a dry and dull manner, or a tedious and prolix style. This is not closeness, but barrenness. No method is less dull than that which puts a single subject in many different lights—which is being close, but not barren. It is barrenness of thought which causes men to wander into other subjects; when they have not skill to vary the point they are discussing, they turn aside to something else. Nothing is more likely to produce dullness than too wide or too complex a subject. For these need many arguments, which must, from their number, be put shortly and close together, which is the dullest of all styles. For common hearers it is not so much abundance of argument and cogent proof that is needed, (for they generally admit what is laid down,) as opening, applying, and enforcing the truth. A very short and simple *argument* is enough for a sermon in *common* cases. Young men, on the contrary, are inclined to work out the arguments most of all, and to reason as they would reason in their own minds; whereas, their hearers would be more persuaded by the comparisons, examples, analogies, contrasts, or applications, which they might use, than by the clearest logic. This, of course, does not exclude argumentative preaching of the highest order in many cases, as, to learned hearers, and indeed occasionally and in due proportion in all places; for doubtless the proof is the foundation of all the truth, and the reason is never to be neglected; but we must consider the persons, and think how we can best edify, not using mere forms of argument, but such as will most convince the reason of those to whom we speak.

AN ANONYMOUS WRITER.

Note E.

EXPOSITORY PREACHING.

Instead of taking a text which comprehends within itself the whole subject of which you would treat, it may often be useful to choose one which hath a reference to things preceding or following it, and to expound all the context. This will afford you a variety of matter, and give you opportunities for short unexpected remarks, with which persons are frequently more struck than with an entire discourse; for of the latter they foresee the drift all the way, and therefore set themselves to fence against it. Thus also you may illustrate the beauties, at the same time that you show the practical uses of large portions of Scripture at once: for instance, of a parable, a conversation, a miracle of our blessed Lord, or a narrative concerning this or that other memorable person, whether deserving of praise or blame: for Scripture histories and examples are easily remembered, and have great weight. In proportion as we overlook them, we shall appear less to be ministers of God's word, and our people will have less veneration for us, or for it, or for both. You may also in this method, as you go along, obviate objections to passages of God's Word, without stating them in form, at which otherwise many may stumble, if they read with attention; and if they do not attend, they will read with no profit. Several things in Holy Writ seem to be strange; hardly consistent one with another, or with our natural notions. Of these difficulties, which must always perplex persons, and may often deliver them over a prey to infidels, you may occasionally remove one and another, meddling with none but such as you can overcome; and from your success in these you may observe to your auditors the probability that others are capable of solutions also. Perhaps they will forget your solution, but they will remember that they heard one, and may have it repeated to them if they please. By these means you will teach your people what is grievously wanting in this present age, to value their Bibles more, and understand them better; and to read them both with pleasure and profit, drawing from them useful inferences and observations, as they have heard you do Formerly courses of lectures on whole books of Scripture were customary in churches, and they were doubtless extremely beneficial. It would not be easy, if

possible, to revive these now, but the practice which I have been proposing to you, is some approach towards them.

ARCHBISHOP SECKER.

In choosing the subject of their lecture, it is the custom of some to take a book of Scripture in order. This seems not to be the most advisable plan. It is not necessary, for your people do not pay much attention to the order, and it is a great restraint upon yourself, confining you to ground which the incidents of the day may make it less profitable to work than other; nor can it fail to impart a formality and dryness to your lecture. It were better to choose a passage which is most in unison with your present predominant reflections, which will most probably have been influenced by the circumstances of the day, and therefore will be responded to by the hearts of your hearers. However your choice may have been directed, you must first of all canvass the passage well in the original Greek, penetrating into the exact senses of the words, ascertaining the real shape of the figures, the proper bearing of the allusions, excluding at present the representations of your own imagination as much as possible. Having thus satisfied yourself as to the real contents of the passage, then examine it in the English version, carefully noting the terms in which it differs from your own mental translation. This is advisable, because, though you are not to convey the sense of the version, you are to convey the sense of the original through that version; and, as it is far from prudent to state that there is any difference between them, you must, in case of such difference, consider how you can adapt the version to your use, without any discernible departure from its text. If you cannot adjust the matter, choose another passage; for remember, that though the English be the authorized vehicle, the Greek is the original authority; and though the necessity of the case compels us to read out an imperfectly translated passage, truth demands that we should not interpret according to it.

The next step is to commit the passage to heart in the Greek, a matter of little difficulty after a proper consideration of it. Then you can turn it over in your mind during your walks from house to house, and during also your waking hours at night, of which you must expect a few after the anxiety and fatigues of a hard day's work. It will thus be like leaven, swelling and extending its influence through your whole mind, and taking in every little circumstance. When you leave a house you will have added a hint or two of com-

ment from your experience within it; an incidental conversation on the road will suggest some useful and practical observation; a walk through a field will supply some figure for illustration; and as you wend your way along some deep lane a cluster of thoughts comes at once into your mind, the unravelling of which occupies the remainder of your walk. And it will always be best to unravel immediately, if you would not let it escape you, for the process makes it strike many roots into your memory. All this advantage is still further secured by choosing your text beforehand; or, since there is nothing like regularity in these things, on the day week before you lecture.

Thus you will have thoroughly digested your text and supplied yourself with the materials of expounding it. You then finally fix the arrangement of your matter, and bring it into a regular form in your own mind under sundry divisions, which you will not discover to your hearers. When you shall have gone over it two or three times in this shape by inward recitation, you will find yourself enabled to deliver with a fluency which will please your hearers, and with a precision of statement which will satisfy your conscience. You will have no ambiguous and perplexed passage to look back to with unpleasant misgivings, no omission to regret, nothing which you wish to unsay, no expression which you wish to qualify. Good encouragement this, to persevere in the same plan, and never on any temptation of sufficient fluency to abandon it.

All this may seem a trouble vastly disproportionate to the importance of so common-place a matter as a lecture. But in handling the truth of God's word, nothing is trifling, and no pains must be spared. If you ever shall think that you can save yourself trouble, and go before your people as minister of the word, as you are, you can have little reverence for that word, or sense of responsibility for its ministration, and your mind is either so ignorant and self-satisfied as not to feel the want of improvement, or so indolent as not to strive after it. The most perfect in any accomplishment whatever is always, from his deep sense of perfection, most alive to the feeling of imperfection; most assiduous therefore to rise continually a step higher, and stimulated by success as being an earnest of greater success. Nor be seduced from attending to these considerations by the familiarity of the lecture. Because plain unlettered people are before you, do not dismiss your fear of responsibility to God, together with your fear of man's criticism. You are miserably mistaken, if you think that the result of deep pondering and of careful prepara-

tion is lost upon them; and that the less you dive into the depths of your mind, the less you exercise its powers, the less you add to its stores, the better prepared you are, because you are come down nearer to their level, and thence will speak more pointedly to their understandings, more affectingly to their hearts. It is not so, and experience will soon convince you of your error. The mind of the most ignorant man is a labyrinth which requires most careful exploring, and the word of God is an instrument which cannot be handled with too much skill.

You may, indeed, without any preparation, have command of language, may deal in tropes and figures, may go over a favourite ground with applause, may fret and fume to the admiration of your ignorant hearers, and by the arts of external show, not only disguise the inward emptiness, but obtain great popularity; but never, never, will you see any better fruit than this of selfish gratification. It ought to set your teeth on edge with its sourness. Looking around on the number of your admirers, you may be thanking God that he has so wonderfully blest your labours; while, if you would condescend carefully and regularly to visit the neighbourhood, and examine your hearers, you would find prevailing a boastful ignorance in the place of substantial truth, forward profession instead of the diffidence arising from inward confession, great talk on speculative generalities instead of the performance of practical particularities; in short, the reflection of your own showy, trashy teaching.

You pray for the gift of rightly dividing the word of God on this occasion. How, then, can you neglect the necessary accompaniment of every prayer, the putting forth all means to ensure the end, which is in fact one essential part of prayer. You solemnly beg a blessing on the occasion. Do you, then, neglect to put yourself under the shower of that blessing, not taking the trouble of going out to ground where alone it is ordained to fall? Will God create the fruit of the lips, where his orders for watering and digging the heart and understanding have not been executed? It would be well, indeed, if your contemptuous neglect of what you perhaps have conveniently deluded yourself into thinking to be too much reliance on human means, ended its consequences with yourself. But how miserable is the result on your people, if they shall grow impatient of sound instruction, become greedy of trash, craving after excitement, unable to eat wholesome bread, because their appetite has been deadened and their palate stimulated by strong drink! But even popu-

larity will depart from you in the long run; at least, your thronged aisles will only be the entrance to a room of more select audience. Just as the drunkard, who has reached the first stage of intoxication at one public house, is apt to go and finish with stronger drink at another, so will it be with your spiritual drunkenness. However you may surrender your taste, your judgment, your feeling, still they will retain some hold upon you, and so far restrain extravagance that the draught which you administer will seem diluted and tasteless, compared with the fiery pungency of that which is dealt forth by less informed and less scrupulous preachers. Most easily will you be outdone in that which you never ought to have done.

There is something very gratifying in the undress communication with your flock, which the lecture supplies. Only remember that, on putting off the fine clothes of a refined education, you are not to appear before them in rags, but to put on the homely but substantial dress suitable to the occasion, which the same education supplies. And it must be put on with care and neatness, and adjusted to your shape, and not thrown on in a hurry or loose about you like a beggar's grea-tcoat. Deliberate preparation, therefore, is indispensable, and without it you will neither show due respect to your fellow men, nor fulfil your responsibility to God.

Rev. Robert Wilson Evans.

Note F.

WRITTEN AND EXTEMPORARY SERMONS.

This is one objection against reading sermons; and there are several besides. Persons who are short-sighted have peculiar reasons to avoid it. Indeed, almost all persons are accustomed from their early years to read in a different tone from that in which they speak at other times, and we seldom correct it thoroughly. Or if we did, what we say in such manner as to make it seem the present dictate of our own hearts, will much better make its way into the hearts of others, than if our eyes are fixed all the while on a paper from which we visibly recite the whole. It will ordinarily be uttered too with more disengaged freedom and livelier spirit. The preacher also will be able to enforce his words by significant looks, to per-

ceive from the countenances of his hearers what they comprehend, and by what they are moved; and may accordingly enlarge on that head, or proceed to another, as he finds cause. He may likewise oppose with success irregular itinerant declaimers, who affect and gain popularity by this method: and as their credulous followers are apt to think it a supernatural gift, he may undeceive them, by imitating in this case the practice of St. Paul in another, which he describes thus: "*What I do, that I will do; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we.*" (2 Cor. xi. 12) But then there must be a long and diligent preparation to do this well; some will scarce ever attain sufficient presence of mind and readiness of expression; others will acquit themselves handsomely in a good flow of spirits, but meanly when these fail them; and though little inaccuracies will be observed by few, yet hesitations will by all, and every considerable fault by sensible hearers, to the preacher's great disgrace. Or, if such do get the faculty of being always able to say something plausible, it will tempt them to neglect the improvement of their understandings and their discourses; and to be content with digressing whenever they are at a loss, from their text and their subject, to any point on which they can be copious; to utter off-hand such crudities as they could not bear to write down, and think the meanest of extempore effusions good enough for the populace. Now, on the contrary, previously studying and writing sermons tends to fill them with well digested and well adapted matter, disposed in right order; especially if you will carefully revise them every time you preach them; supply deficiencies, blot out repetitions, correct improprieties, guard against misapprehensions, enlighten what is obscure, familiarize what is too high, transpose what is wrongly placed, strengthen the weak parts, animate the languid ones. Your composition needs not be at all the stiffer, but may be the freer for the pains thus employed upon it. You may frame it purposely to be spoken as if you were not reading it, and by looking it over a few times when you are about to use it, you may deliver it almost without being observed to read it. The more you acquire of this art, the more you will be liked, and the stronger impression you will make. But after all, *every man*, as the Apostle saith on a different occasion, *hath his proper gift of God; one after this manner, another after that;* (1 Cor. vii. 7;) let each cultivate his own, and no one censure or despise his brother. There is a middle way used by our predecessors, of setting down, in short notes, the method, and principal

heads, and enlarging on them in such words as present themselves at the time. Perhaps, duly managed, this would be the best. That which is, or lately was, common among foreign Divines, of writing sermons first, then getting and repeating them by heart, not only is unreasonably laborious, but subjects persons to the hazard of stopping disagreeably, and even breaking off abruptly for want of memory. Or, if they escape that danger, there still remains another, of saying their lesson with ungraceful marks of fear and caution.

ARCHBISHOP SECKER.

This is not the place to settle whether it is best to preach with or without manuscript; but a few hints on the subject may be added as a finish. Each of these two methods is liable to faults too obvious to need describing particularly; and each has advantages. The evil of using the manuscript is, perhaps, not so much that it may engender a dull manner of *reading* for preaching, as that it allows the preacher's mind to be inactive; although this is indeed the real cause of the dulness of manner. The sermon was preached by his mind when it was composed: it ought to be equally in his thought when delivered as it was when composed, and to be uttered as from the heart, not as a re-perusal of former thoughts; otherwise it is hardly the *act* of preaching. But the ease of reading from the manuscript favours the inclination of the mind to relax the earnest attention and deep feeling which the subject demands. This is the evil which follows all artificial helps to the memory—that as labour is saved to the mind, action is lost. The remedy is, to take care that the mind does not relax from severe thought, because it has the writing to fall back upon; and to keep it still full of the subject. With regard to the other method, if it be difficult to speak in public on any subject, it surely must be most difficult in the most difficult of all subjects, namely, religion, in which not even a careless form of expression can be suffered; and such is preaching without manuscript. It seems, therefore, great boldness to undertake this absolutely, without limitation; because it is most likely that any one could compose and write better than he could speak on a subject which *cannot* be treated of without premeditation; (for let both the name and the idea of *extempore*, that is, off-hand, unpremeditated preaching, be forever proscribed;) and so far, it would seem, that one anxious to be *best* prepared for preaching would resort to elaborate composition. On the other hand, it seems a great evil, that they who are commission-

ed to teach the people should be quite unable to say a word unless they have it written down before them; which doubtless is often the case with those who compose excellent sermons. Yet it may be said, again, that since they have always the power to compose beforehand, *that* is the best method which produces the best matter to be preached. The greater degree of interest excited by preaching without book ought not to be overlooked in the question. But beside the consideration, that there is such a thing as "itching ears," and people "heaping to themselves teachers," let him who admits this as a reason look narrowly into himself to see that he desires not the applause and admiration of his hearers, but the promotion of the truth only; and then perhaps he may make a different estimate of the value of the effect produced from what is sometimes made. Perhaps if this were *all*, it might be better to endeavour to deliver the best sermons which could be composed (which would be written sermons) in such a manner that the effect might be, if possible, the same as if they were not written; or to do as was done generally until after the Revolution, to learn by rote written sermons. But there is more than the manner in most cases: the matter is different in sermons without manuscript; they are simpler and less argumentative, and therefore make more impression on the unlearned. Written sermons are often too argumentative for the common people.

After all, what is the end proposed to both methods? It is simply the highest degree of divine eloquence, the greatest power to preach the truth. It is plain, then, that no one can be right who chooses either for the sake of saving himself trouble. For improvement is given us in all things by use of human means, and he who desires excellence must labour to make progress. Therefore, if we preach without writing, we ought to take as much pains with the matter as if we did, that is to say, all that we can; or if we write what we preach, we ought to keep our thoughts as closely intent on it as if it were retained in thought only. And the point which we should endeavour to reach, would be, the possession of power both to compose and to speak in equal perfection. This is the mark towards which we ought to direct our aim, the standard of our level in the abstract. Perhaps the following suggestions may be useful as a practical limit in the application of it. Since all persons (with a few exceptions of small moment in this case) speak better with preparation than without, every preacher will use the best preparation beforehand that he can: and since preparation is the more needed, as

the occasion or subject-matter is the greater or the more difficult, every preacher will most carefully prepare beforehand what he is to say when he is called to perform this duty under the most trying circumstances; which may be as regards the subject-matter, or the solemnity of the occasion, or the class of the hearers. And it seems evident that the most careful preparation which can be made, is elaborate composition in writing. It seems inconceivable how any one can of his own accord neglect the use of such preparation. Men may be hindered from making it, or make it unskilfully; but he who contemptuously throws it away, as if he did not want it, or despises those who use it, seems either to mistake his own strength, or to slight the weight of responsibility and the difficulty of the office laid on him. It would rather seem that he who was most careful to perform this heavy duty well, would make most use of writing in preparation for preaching.

Again, on the other hand, since it is necessary that every preacher should possess as much power as he can acquire of teaching and influencing the people in his ministerial office, he ought not to be disabled from executing his office, by want of time or opportunity to prepare himself in the way above spoken of. In short, he ought to be able to preach, in some way, and to some good purpose, under all circumstances; therefore he ought to exercise himself, and study to get and to improve that ability. So that, though he always makes the best preparation that he can, he must also prepare himself to do sometimes without preparation. Yet it ought to be remembered, that the pulpit in the congregation is not to be made his place of practice; for that would be using it, not for the discharge of his solemn office in teaching, but for his own private exercise. But the young clergyman will be at no loss for opportunities of improving himself in this talent, namely, in the school-room, in catechising, in the familiar lecture, and in conversation.

Let me add one more remark, which belongs not to these last pages only, but to all that has been said—that it is supposed, and assumed throughout, that the preacher's or reader's mind is full of his subject, and that he is in earnest. For in the whole course of the observations and reasonings which have now been put before you, there has been little direct appeal to the high principles of Christianity. Yet I hope that no one will suppose they are ever overlooked or forgotten: the plan and design of the work was only to treat in a summary way of minor matters, for the use and help of the inexperi-

enced; and this seemed to forbid entering on deeper and weightier matters, or doing more than referring shortly to them, or expressing them by implication; but they are understood and taken for granted in every sentence. In the latter part, especially, let it never be thought that any one can rightly set about to preach, or preach at all, unless he begin with zeal to animate and knowledge to direct him; and unless, beside and beyond all that he has or does, there be added the Spirit which is "given him from above."

ANONYMOUS WRITER.

THE END.

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